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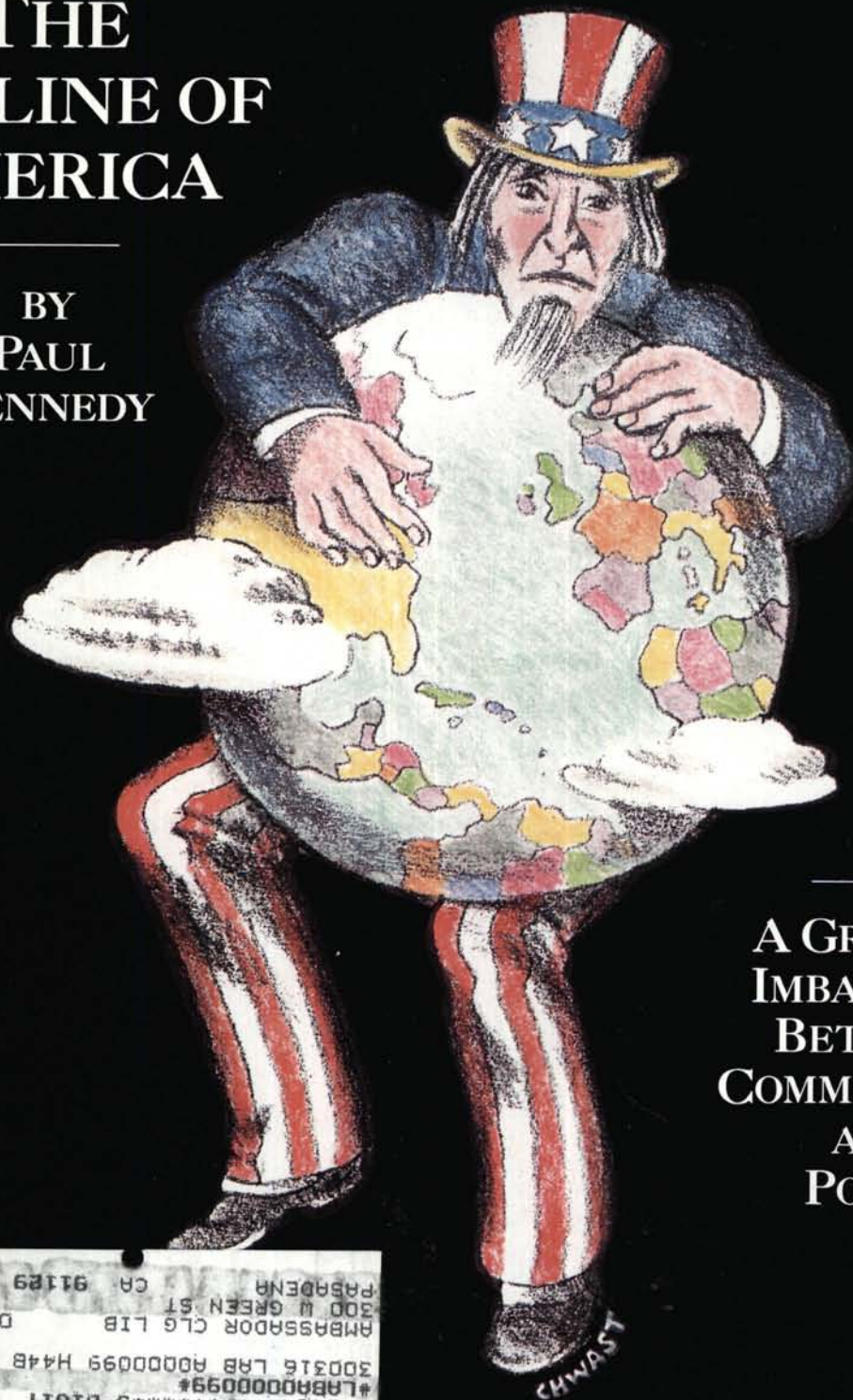
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The Atlantic

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THE DECLINE OF AMERICA

BY
PAUL
KENNEDY



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BETWEEN
COMMITMENTS
AND
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Cover illustration by Seymour Chwast



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\$5.00 additional per year elsewhere.
Address all subscription correspondence
to Atlantic Subscription Processing Center
Box 2547, Boulder, Colorado 80322
(800) 525-0643
In Colorado 1-447-9330

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(ISSN 0276-9077) All rights reserved

Advertising sales:
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New York, New York 10022
(212) 326-5350

Chicago (312) 527-2707
James Sheridan

Dallas (214) 969-5511
Sherm Davis

Detroit (313) 626-6704
Nicolette Phillips

Public relations:
Richard L. Plepler
RLP Incorporated
(212) 688-4058
445 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10022

The Atlantic August 1987
Vol. 260 No. 2

Published monthly by
The Atlantic Monthly Company
8 Arlington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Second-class postage paid at
Boston, Toronto, and additional
mailing offices

Unsolicited manuscripts will
be returned *only* if accompanied
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Nuclear energy helped America achieve its energy balance. Is it a balance we can keep?

The 1973 Arab oil embargo forced America to turn to alternatives to foreign oil. Reliable alternatives. America increased its use of electricity from nuclear energy and coal and began to make important strides toward energy independence.

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What happens when we become too dependent on foreign sources? We lose our balance. It's the first misstep toward losing our

energy security. In 1973, that meant short supplies, long gas lines, expensive fuels and critical damage to our economy.

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And, while our use of oil and natural gas is down from 1973 levels, we now use about 45% more coal and almost 400% more nuclear energy than we did then.

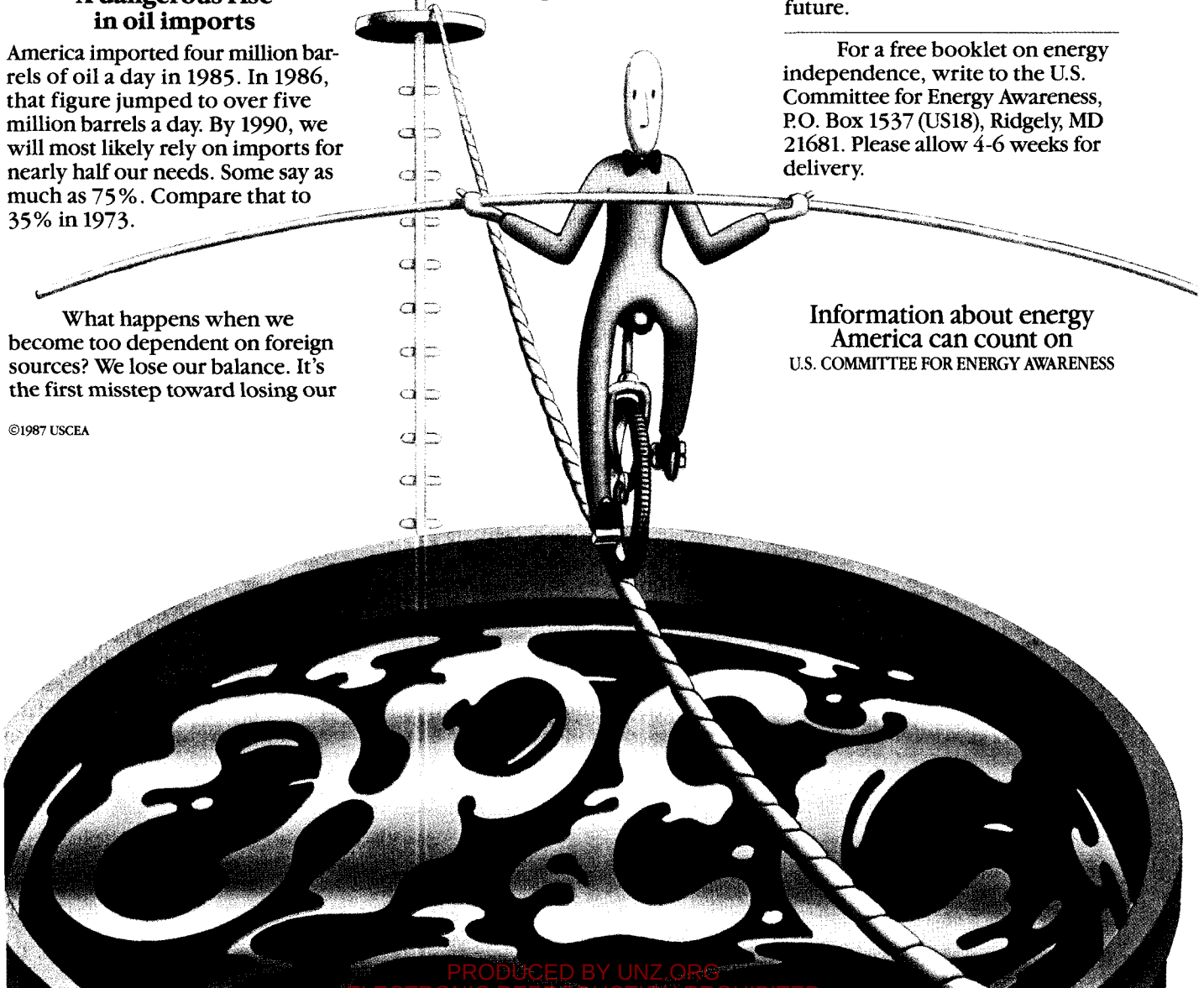
Nuclear energy for a secure future

Obviously, nuclear energy can't completely replace oil here. And our own limited oil resources will force us to continue to rely on foreign suppliers. The good news is nuclear energy and coal, America's two leading sources of electricity, have helped us establish a more secure energy mix. They can help us build a more secure energy future.

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599 Lexington Avenue / New York, N.Y. 10022

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE COKE WAR

Surprisingly, David Kline did not mention in his article "How to Lose the Coke War" (May *Atlantic*) that the methods he wrote about for eliminating or reducing coca production were tried and failed in Peru in 1981.

The solution to the eradication of coca and the cocaine problem is not one of high-visibility, high-speed strikes, which have already cost millions of dollars and a number of lives. Nor does it lie in spending millions to increase and equip border forces to protect the United States from infiltration by narcotics traffickers (who continue to penetrate them). And it does not lie in rehabilitation programs, which are only 20 percent successful.

The solution lies in what could be politically unpopular: a long-term program of essentially rural development and crop substantiation.

The burden of eradication of the excess coca, preparation of the land for substitute crops, procurement of seed or seedlings, planting, and construction of dams, bridges, and secondary roads should be borne by the country involved, but Peru and Bolivia, where the ecological conditions exist to permit coca growth, could not bear the cost alone. It seems logical that helping funds should come from the countries where addiction creates the demand.

CHARLES STUART PARK
Nogales, Ariz.

David Kline ably examines the problems encountered by American narcocrats in their effort to eradicate the Bolivian cocaine crop, and closes with the truism that only a single-minded commitment by the Bolivians themselves can accomplish the task.

But why should we ever expect Bolivia to make such a commitment? Cocaine cultivation has been an accepted feature of Bolivian agronomy and culture for centuries, carries no local stigma, and is the nation's largest industry by far. The only thing less likely to occur than a Bolivian commitment to eradicate cocaine is an Iowan commitment to eradicate corn.

STANLEY NEUSTADTER
New York, N.Y.

David Kline replies:

I certainly have no disagreement with Charles Park's critique of the high-profile, public-relations-oriented drug fighting efforts that Washington seem to favor. I sought to make exactly his point when I described the failure of last year's Operation Blast Furnace in Bolivia, in which U.S. helicopters and troops went chasing through the Bolivian jungle for four months, raiding empty cocaine laboratories for the TV cameras but seizing neither drugs nor traffickers.

However, I disagree with Park's faith in crop substitution as the answer; contrary to his assertion, this approach has been tried and has consistently failed. In Bolivia expanding crop-substitution programs have neither slowed the growth of the coca crop nor reversed the steady migration of both capital and the rural labor force to the coca fields and drug-processing regions.

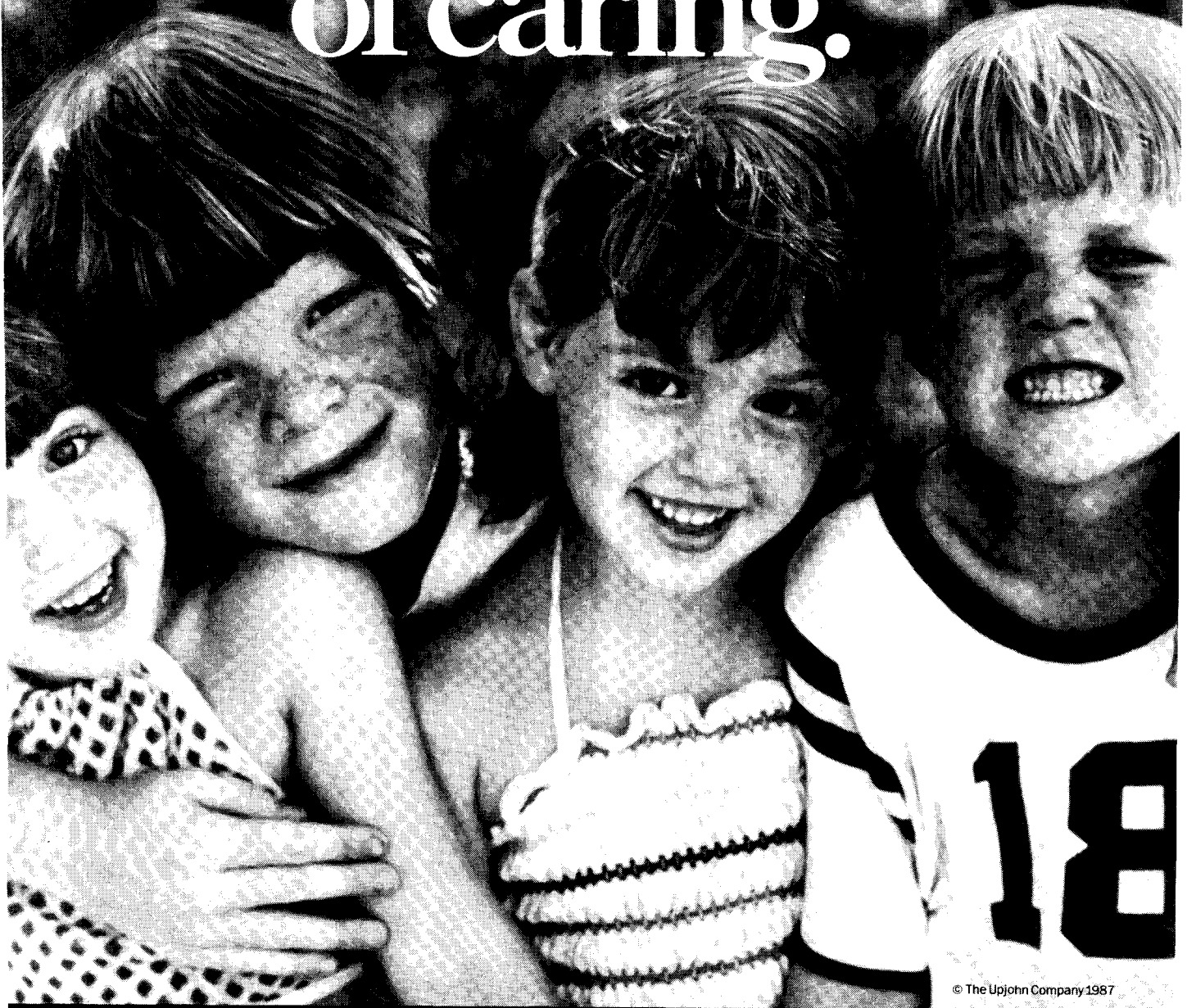
Stanley Neustadter confuses the traditional cultivation of coca leaf in Bolivia, which requires at most 10,000 metric tons to meet domestic chewing need with the illicit cocaine business, which grows nearly 240,000 metric tons of coca each year to meet the raw-material needs of the drug bosses. The form has been going on for at least 5,000 years and should not be interfered with. The latter is only one or two decades old, and can be combated.

IN HARM'S WAY

It is always depressing to be quoted in an article with which one thoroughly disagrees. That was my fate in Jack Beatty's article in the May issue of *Atlantic* on the U.S. maritime strategy ("In Harm's Way"), a subject about which I have written extensively.

Beatty seems to imagine that it is possible to replace the offensive-minded maritime strategy with the non-offensive form of sea control beloved by classical maritime strategists. But in the Atlantic during the Second World War attempts were made repeatedly to destroy German anti-shipping forces, both submarines and surface ships, at their source. Examples include the numerous direct attacks on the *Tirpitz*, the command raid on the crucial drydock at St. N.

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zaire, the mining of the Baltic U-boat training areas by the RAF, and the "earthquake bomb" raids on U-boat pens in France.

Convoy was a useful but limited tactic; it was certainly not a sovereign cure for the U-boat "measles." In particular, if a convoy's escort was not strong enough, it would represent not an intimidating defensive concentration but rather an attractive concentration of targets. That was certainly the experience of the British in the Mediterranean—and it also applied to convoys attacked by German aircraft, on both the North Russia and Malta runs. There is good reason to believe that modern nuclear submarines would find themselves emulating the U.S. experience in the Pacific, reveling in a concentration of more or less helpless targets. The unidentified "scholarly work" cited in the article seems to miss such subtleties; there were plenty of devastating convoy battles, in which wolf packs of U-boats massacred merchant ships.

Beatty says that the Soviets would probably much prefer to stay in their bastions, protecting their precious ballis-

tic-missile submarines. Why bother them there? True—to a point. At the outset of a war the Soviets would probably pull their forces back to protect the bastions. However, if NATO were, by some miracle, successful in holding back the Soviet Army on land, that success would ultimately rest on the regular delivery of fresh munitions and parts by sea. Even the dimmest Soviet general staff officer would begin to ask why the Soviet Navy had not cut that supply line. That would be the signal for general anti-shipping war—unless the Soviets had some better reason to continue to hold back, such as strong U.S. pressure on the bastions. What Beatty has missed is that any war has a dynamic; measures that make perfectly good sense at one time in the war can be counterproductive, even fatally so, at other times. One advantage of a *strategic* view is that it makes this dynamic clearer.

NORMAN FRIEDMAN
New York, N.Y.

Jack Beatty does not face up to the limitations of his own analysis, especially as it describes U.S. participation

in the defense of the North Atlantic Alliance.

First, Beatty strongly suggests that the Soviet threat to Western Europe is essentially a "strategic fiction" used to justify U.S. defense spending. This is breathtaking in the light of the Soviet patent willingness to use military options to support their policies in Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. Would an Western European country feel more secure if no precautions against the possibility of Soviet aggression had been taken? Would any actually *be* more secure?

Second, Beatty, who is quick to accuse naval officers of "unilateralism," writes as if U.S. naval planning is being undertaken without consideration of the concerns and the significant naval capabilities of our NATO allies. This is not the case; the former chief of naval operations, Admiral Watkins, in his public exposition of the maritime strategy began by noting that "our national strategy is built on three pillars: deterrence, forward defense, and alliance solidarity. The plans and operations of the U.S. Navy derive from this principle.

Finally, the article assumes that the

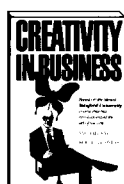
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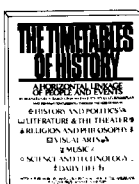
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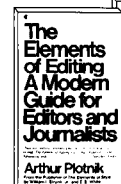
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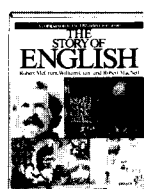
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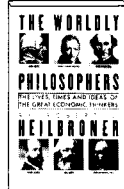
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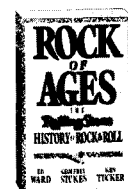
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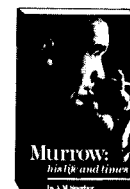
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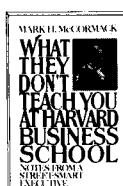
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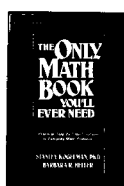
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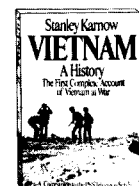
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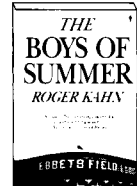
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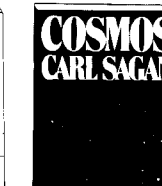
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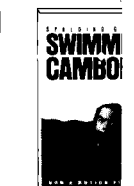
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maritime strategy encourages nuclear escalation, whereas ground defense of NATO's Central Front (on which the Russians might, if they felt their flanks were safe, concentrate forces redeployed from the northern and southern parts of the USSR) could be achieved at the conventional level. Few in this country or in Europe accept such easy optimism; for this reason NATO strategy has from the beginning had a nuclear component. The maritime strategy ensures that Moscow's leaders will know they risk their own vital strategic maritime and territorial assets (that is, SSBNs and key shore installations) should they opt for war. A far less desirable alternative would be a long, drawn-out conventional struggle climaxed by a last desperate throw of nuclear dice.

RICHARD A. BEST, JR.
Washington, D.C.

One might wish that in his plea for a defensive strategy, Jack Beatty could have selected battles other than Waterloo and Gettysburg to buttress his case. For most of June 18, 1815, Wellington stood masterfully on the defensive—of necessity: he was outnumbered until Blucher came on the ground. But Beatty omits mention of Wellington's decision to attack in the final and ultimately decisive stage of the battle.

As for Gettysburg: Meade did *not* similarly shift to the offensive after his defensive stand had prevailed. His failure to do so was most regrettable; at least, so say critics who hold that with the relatively fresh and unbloodied Sixth Corps at hand, he lost an unparalleled opportunity to turn a narrow victory into a decisive rout.

Perhaps more to the point, are precedents of individual battles the proper criteria on which to base strategy for a war?

MARK H. JORDAN, P.E.
Captain, U.S. Navy, retired
Troy, N.Y.

In his criticism of U.S. Navy strategy, Jack Beatty argued that sixty Soviet submarines cannot sink 14,000 allied merchant ships; U.S. offensive naval power is "like sticking pins in the hide of an elephant"; and U.S. offensive naval power threatens Soviet ballistic-mis-

sile submarines and could lead to global nuclear war.

So: U.S. naval power is not necessary, because our purported armada of merchant ships offers too many targets; U.S. naval power is regarded as trivial by the Soviets; and the Soviets may initiate nuclear war and commit suicide if U.S. naval power is employed.

For forty years NATO officials have said that the West may be compelled to initiate nuclear war if the Soviets attack with overwhelming conventional force. Now Beatty has written that a conventional response by the U.S. Navy to such a Soviet attack may compel the Soviets to use nuclear weapons. If they know they are too weak to succeed in a conventional attack, they will not attack in the first place.

Beatty has succeeded in persuading me that a powerful U.S. Navy is a deterrent to Soviet aggression.

F. J. WEST, JR.
McLean, Va.

Jack Beatty quotes me (correctly) as arguing that "the better NATO's nonnuclear forces fare on land and at sea, the

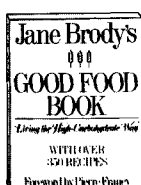
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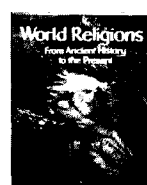
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stronger the incentive will be for the Soviets to engage in nuclear escalation." This was not an "admission" on my part, as Beatty claims, but simply a statement of the obvious.

I argued that the frustration of a Soviet non-nuclear attack would have to increase the Soviet interest or incentive to escalate in search of a tolerable outcome at a higher level of violence. Therefore, I argued, our conventional capabilities *must* be provided with very robust nuclear cover so as to maintain escalation discipline on the Soviets' part. I believe, but cannot be certain (*nothing* about a future war can be certain), that such nuclear cover could be sustained. In his abuse of my commonplace point, Beatty appears to be suggesting that NATO's conventional forces on land and sea should not fight very effectively, lest they frighten the Soviets into nuclear escalation!

COLIN S. GRAY
Fairfax, Va.

Jack Beatty replies:

Norman Friedman is right: the Allies repeatedly tried to "destroy German anti-shipping forces at their source" in the Second World War. But the examples he cites were minor offensive side-shows to the main Allied defensive battle against the U-boats. The naval strategists of that day were not so reckless as to mount against U-boat pens the kind of carrier-based offensive strike called for by the Navy's current maritime strategy.

I agree with Friedman that should the war on the Central Front reach a stalemate, the Soviets would probably try to cut the sea lines of communication connecting the United States with Europe. But I disagree with his view that faced with the imminent prospect of Soviet attack subs surging out into the Atlantic, the Navy should move to sink them in their bastions before they can depart. Let the Soviet subs come to us instead. Let them try to get through the defensive line we could set up covering the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap into the Atlantic. To be sure, their anti-ship Backfire bombers can range that far out from their bases, but they can't bring along their fighter escorts; thus our carrier and land-based planes would have a better chance of shooting them down before they made *Starks* of our fleet.

In reply to Richard Best, first, I really don't see that the examples of Czecho-

slovakia and Afghanistan are relevant to understanding the Soviet threat to Western Europe. Some Western observers point to the enormous Soviet Army based in Eastern Europe and European Russia as evidence, if not proof, that the Soviets mean to burst into Western Europe just as soon as our guard is down. This view of Soviet intentions is an example of what Michael McCWire, in his recent authoritative study of Soviet military objectives, calls "the colonel's fallacy." A colonel properly assumes the worst about an enemy's motives on the battlefield, but this worst-case thinking is inappropriate at the level of national strategy, where the focus should be on the possible political and national-security motives of an adversary, and not merely on his military capabilities. Based on his research into Soviet military objectives, McCWire interprets the Soviet conventional military buildup as a sign not of a Soviet urge to take over Western Europe but rather of the much less worrying Soviet calculation that in the event of war the USSR must have forces sufficient to repel a NATO advance on the European continent; otherwise it would get into a losing war against an undamaged industrial economy. In other words, the 50,000 Warsaw Pact tanks in Europe (a three-to-one advantage over NATO) reflect a desire not to make war but to prevail *should war break out*.

As to Best's second point, I did not accuse naval officers of unilateralism. What I said was that fifteen big-deck-carrier battle groups are far better suited to Third World intervention than to the conventional naval war against Russia called for by the maritime strategy. The Navy is rightly reluctant to send carriers into the narrow waters of the Persian Gulf, but the maritime strategists would have us believe that this same Navy would send the carriers within fighter-plane range of the Russian bases on the Kola Peninsula, through the narrow approaches to the Baltic, and through the even narrower Bosphorus into the Black Sea!

As to Best's third point, the difference between NATO's ground and air defense of Europe and the maritime strategy is this: the former does not pose a threat to the Soviet's strategic nuclear reserve; the latter does. That is why the maritime strategy—more particularly, its campaign against the Soviet missile-carrying submarines—is so dangerous. In any conventional war with the Soviet

Union, NATO would have two objectives: victory (restoration of the status quo ante) and preventing accident or inadvertence from making the war nuclear. The maritime strategy, in pursuit of a delusive leverage over the Soviets, puts that second objective at risk.

Captain Jordan is right: individual battles should not be used as the criteria "on which to base strategy for a war." I cited Waterloo and Gettysburg to make the generic point that defense is not something to be despised as craven, which is the way some maritime strategists seem to regard it. But, accepting Captain Jordan's point, let me offer an example of defensive strategy used successfully in modern naval warfare—the British decision in the Great War to mount a "distant blockade" of the German High Seas Fleet, rather than risk its battleships.

I agree with F. J. West that the Soviets must be convinced that "they are too weak to succeed in a conventional attack" (should they ever wish to launch one). But is spending \$140 billion on a naval buildup, which is about what we have done in the Reagan years, the best way to get that message across? I can't improve on Edward Luttwak's judgment on this point: "The United States is giving its highest budget priority to naval forces, which in a major conflict with the Soviet Union would be the least useful, except to oppose the Soviet Navy, *to which the Soviet Union gives the lowest budget priority*."

Finally, in answer to Colin Gray, I would return to a point made earlier—that preventing accidental or inadvertent nuclear escalation is one of the two main NATO objectives in a conventional war against the Soviet Union. Gray's strategic writings show a stronger commitment to the other NATO objective, victory, than they do to keeping the war this side of the nuclear firebreak. I would contend that if reciprocal escalation occurs, victory would be meaningless. Therefore, preventing escalation is the condition of any victory worthy of the name. I don't call it "fighting very effectively" to push the world over the nuclear brink; I call it madness.

ADVICE & CONSENT

The acronym WYSIWYG, which was included in the Word Watch section of the May *Atlantic*, caught my attention. I was surprised that the entry dic

not mention the comedian Flip Wilson and his creation Geraldine, who made "What you see is what you get" a national catchphrase some fifteen years ago. As far as I can tell, Wilson originated the phrase, which was in vogue a considerable time before gradually disappearing from common usage. When it reappeared as a computer buzzword in word-processing, perhaps a distant memory of Geraldine was involved.

JOHN LEWIS
Morrisonville, N.Y.

Chalk up another one for the intellectual kitsch-busters. Katie Leishman's essay on Pee-wee Herman ("Harlequin," May *Atlantic*) was the equivalent of a historian's thesis on the rise and fall of mood rings and Velveteen cheese (in that order). All we pop-culture groupies need is a psychological analysis of Mr. Pee-wee. What's next—a cross-section of the guy's brain?

BARBARA SUTTON
Boston, Mass.

Re Katie Leishman's article "Heterosexuals and AIDS" (February *Atlantic*): more needs to be said about the issue of screening.

Any screening test has as its basis three components: specificity, having to do with the proportion of people screened for antibodies to the HIV virus who have never been exposed to the virus and who test negative; sensitivity, the proportion of people screened who have been exposed and who test positive; and prevalence, the proportion of people in the population being screened who have been exposed.

A test with a given sensitivity and specificity can have very different predictive values, depending on the prevalence of the disease in the population to which it is applied. This is not some theoretical concern. It is a very real issue with very real consequences. In a random population, for example, the predictive value of the ELISA test may be as low as two percent. This means that for every 100 who test positive, only two actually will have been exposed; the remaining 98 will have to cope with the consequences of false positive findings. This is particularly important in view of proposals for mandatory premarital screening, and the Defense Department's recently inaugurated general screening program for HIV exposure in the armed forces. Some corporations now perform HIV screening

in their pre-employment process. The possibilities for future screening seem endless.

But, whereas screening among high-risk and high-prevalence groups makes sense, screening the general population for exposure to the HIV virus is less reasonable. Because the prevalence of this virus within the general population is so low, a high proportion of people will be falsely labeled as having been exposed, with grim consequences. And the cost of such testing will be tremendous.

JOHN PETER BIGOS, M.D., M.P.H.
JOSEPH A. STANKAITIS, M.D., M.P.H.
Cambridge, Mass.

Robert Atwan's "Great Moments in Literary Baseball" (May *Atlantic*) was a joy to read, but I regret that he ignored two of my favorite players, Tom "Spitter" Eliot and Eddie "Madman" Forster.

Spitter Eliot, Red Sox relief ace, was summarily drummed out of baseball for putting too much English on the ball. In later years he recounted the painful experience of Opening Day, 1947, at Yankee Stadium in verse excerpted here.

On the mound the pitchers come and go
Talking of Joe DiMaggio . . .

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and "Do I dare?"

Should I, after vaseline and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Batboy hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

Shall I part my hair behind?
Do I dare to eat a peach?

Who's on first? What's on second?

I have heard the Hall of Famers singing, each to each.

I do not think they will sing to me.

April is the cruelest month.

Eddie "Madman" Forster, clutch batting wizard, batted third, before Stan Musial, for the Cards. Asked the secret of his remarkable on-base average, he replied, "Heck, style ain't nothin' for me. Hits count with Musial behind ya. Only connect!"

GRETCHEN FELTES
New York, N.Y.

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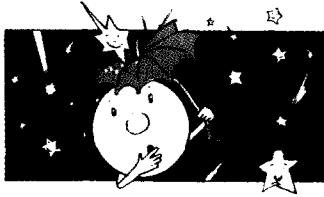
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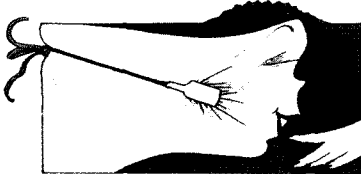


THE SKIES

August 1, Lammas, an astronomical cross-quarter day: the sun is midway between the place it occupied at the summer solstice and the place it will occupy at the autumnal equinox. Lammas (from the Anglo-Saxon *hlafmaesse*, meaning "loaf mass") once occasioned "first grains," a pagan festival that Christianity later appropriated. 9, Full Moon, also known this month as the Grain or Green Corn Moon. 10, the dog days of summer are heralded by Sirius, the Dog Star, now visible before sunrise in the eastern sky. 12, the Perseid meteor showers begin. 24, New Moon.

NEW STAMPS

August 14, a block of four 22-cent stamps commemorating the art of lacemaking to be issued in Ypsilanti, Michigan. 25, a \$5 stamp featuring Bret Harte to be issued in Twain Harte, California. 28, a booklet of 22-cent stamps in five designs that together spell out the preamble of the U.S. Constitution to be issued in Washington, D.C.

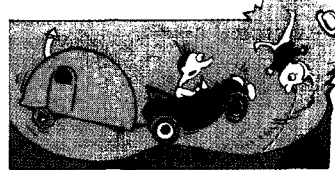


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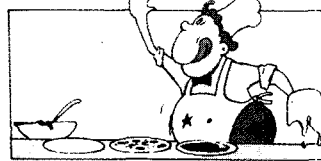
GOVERNMENT

August 8, congressional recess begins, allowing lawmakers to catch up on foreign travel. According to a recent report by the group Public Citizen, 17 percent of congressional overseas trips take place in August, at an average cost to the taxpayer of \$12,000 per trip. For obvious reasons, the volume of travel is highest in non-election years, like this one. In August of the last non-election year, 1985, some 90 congressmen visited 63 countries on fact-finding trips. The five countries visited most frequently by concerned legislators in 1985 were these global trouble spots: France (112 congressional visitors), Italy (110), Britain (103), West Germany (98), and Switzerland (71).



HEALTH & SAFETY

One good thing about hot August nights is that they help reduce the incidence of "lying-in-the-road death." This warm-weather phenomenon, most prevalent in the South, claims hundreds of lives a year. (Most states do not distinguish in their records between people who are upright and those who are prone when fatally struck by automobiles; in North Carolina, which does, some 25 lying-in-the-road deaths occur annually.) The typical victim is a male who has begun walking home from a rural bar late at night. Evidently, the loss of body heat that results from heavy alcohol consumption causes the victim to be drawn to the warmth retained by the surface of a paved road. The great majority of lying-in-the-road deaths occur from May to October, but the number drops markedly in August, when the nights are at their hottest and therefore the air and the pavement tend to be more nearly the same temperature.

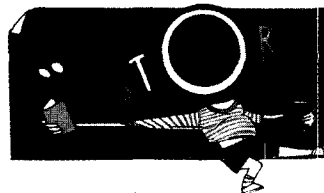


FOOD

America's restaurants, particularly roadside establishments, are at their busiest in August. A typical family of four will spend more than \$200 eating out this month. The United States now has well over 250,000 restaurants; franchises make up nearly a third of the total and account for more than 40 percent of sales (and their share in both categories keeps growing). Although hamburger chains have nearly half the food-franchise market, their share of the total is declining because of America's continuing disenchantment with red meat, as is the share held by "steak/full menu" restaurants. But pizza's slice of the franchise market has been growing fast—even though pizza (owing, a recent study revealed, to the heat-retentive properties of tomato sauce) is among the foods most likely to burn the roof of one's mouth.

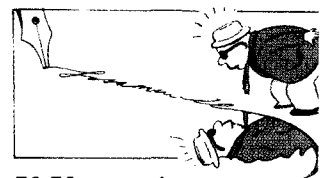
ARTS & LETTERS

Teachers will begin to unpack some 250 million new textbooks late this month. A typical fifth-grade U.S. history book contains no mention of the McCarthy era or the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. The following is one text's discussion, in its entirety, of superpower relations in the 1980s: "In 1983 the Soviet Union shot down a civilian Korean airliner. There were sixty Americans aboard the plane. The airliner had flown into Soviet airspace by mistake. In 1984 the Soviet Union refused to send its athletes to the summer Olympics in Los Angeles."



DEMOGRAPHICS

Americans take more vacation trips (average time away: 6.1 nights) in August than in any other month. In a typical summer Americans spend the equivalent of 66,018 human lifetimes on the road, although to parents traveling with children it may seem longer. Time off is not shared equally among Americans. Last year top U.S. corporate executives took, on the average, only 14 days of vacation—6 days fewer than the average mid-level federal employee took (and 33 days fewer than the nation's most senior federal employee spent at his ranch in Santa Barbara). Western Europeans in general have it easier than Americans. U.S. production workers get some 1 vacation days a year, considerably less than their counterparts in Ireland (20 days), Portugal (22), Finland (25), and Italy (29).



50 YEARS AGO

Christopher Morley, writing about the 12th edition of Barlett's *Familiar Quotations*, which he edited, in the August, 1933 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Man is a sententious animal, splendid in syllables and pompous in afterthought; nothing makes so bewildered an impression on him as the disparity between his words and his behavior. He shrewdly learns not to put too much of what he thinks into writing, lest he be held responsible. Therefore he is the more astonished, touched with delight and compunction when he observes that what he himself had hidden somewhere else has uncovered. Having learned so much of the cunning of concealment, he is fit to appreciate the joy of exposure. One of the most appealing phases of the entertainment called Literature is a psychological strip-tease."

When You Go From Cutting Figure Eights To Cutting Deals.



When they were cutting figures in U.S. Pairs Competition, they drew raves for their style. Now that JoJo Starbuck and Ken Shelley have paired up in business, nothing's changed. Their new production company, 'The Skate Source,' has gained accolades from L.A. to D.C. by providing everything from ice-skating showgirls to entire ice-skating shows.

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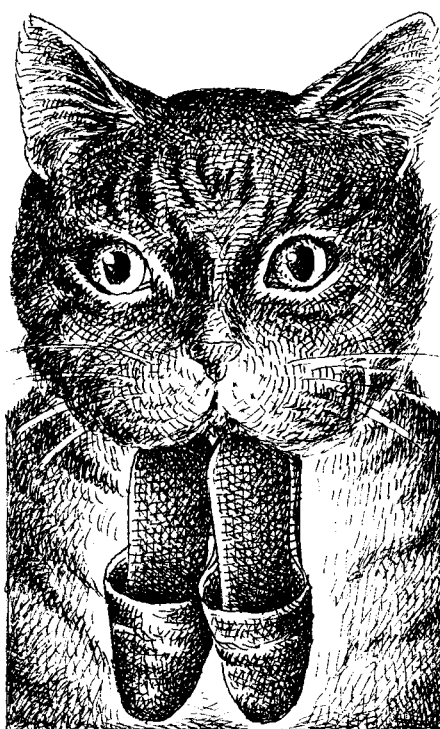
NOTES

GOING TO THE CATS

EVERY DECADE OR SO the United States of America crosses some portentous new threshold that symbolizes the nation's evolution from one kind of society into another. It crossed one after the Second World War, when for the first time in history American men bought more belts than they did suspenders. It crossed another in the mid-1950s, when the number of tractors on American farms for the first time exceeded the number of horses. Now, in the 1980s, the country faces a new demographic reality: the number of cats in American households is rapidly overtaking, if it has not already overtaken, the number of dogs. According to the Pet Food Institute, a Washington-based trade association, there were about 18 million more dogs than cats in the United States as recently as a decade ago, but today there are 56 million cats and only 52 million dogs. Actually, because millions of unregistered dogs and cats—the illegal aliens of the animal kingdom—go uncounted, it may be that dogs still maintain a slight edge. But sales of dog food are holding steady, whereas sales of cat food have been increasing in recent years at an annual rate of five to eight percent. The trend is clear.

This is not the place to dredge up all the old arguments on the relative merits of cats and dogs, friend of the mouse though I am. But it does seem to me that the displacement of *Canis familiaris* by *Felis catus* might tell us something larger about the condition of the republic, much as from a single drop of rain (to

cite Sherlock Holmes's famous example) one might infer the existence of oceans. Consider an America congenial to the dog: it was a place of nuclear or extended families, of someone always home, of children (or pet) looked after during the day by a parent (or owner), of open spaces and family farms, of sticks and leftovers, of expansiveness and looking outward and being outside; it was the America of Willa Cather and Lassie and Leon Leonwood Bean. Consider an America conducive to the cat: it is a place of working men and women with not much time, of crowded cities, of apartment buildings with restrictive clauses, of day-care and take-out food, of self-absorption and modest horizons; it is the America of Tama Janowitz and *Blade Runner* and The Sharper Image catalogue.



These generalizations may, I suppose, be extreme, but they are prompted in part by the new, 1987 edition of the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, which I recently received in the mail. This may be the best book the government publishes, and I wish I could earmark my taxes every year to pay the salary of its editor. According to the *Abstract*, here is some of what has happened to the country from the time when dogs were an overwhelming majority of household pets (I've chosen the early to middle 1970s) to the present day: the amount of land claimed by cities increased by 191,795 square miles, or 49 percent; the number of people living in cities increased by 33 million; the number of households consisting of only one person doubled, to 21 million, and as a proportion of all households increased by 41 percent; the number of families headed by only one parent more than doubled, to 7 million, and as a proportion of all families increased by 100 percent; the proportion of childless couples with both partners in the labor force increased by 9.5 percent; the proportion of working couples with children under three increased by 56 percent; the proportion of new houses having no more than two bedrooms doubled, and the average size of new housing units shrank by nineteen square feet; the number of people living in a typical rental unit declined by 13 percent, to 2.0, and the number living in the average occupant-owned unit declined by 16 percent, to 2.5; the number of miles American traveled (including going to work) increased by 631 billion; the amount of money spent on fast food increased by 153 percent; membership in the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts declined by 25 percent. The *Abstract* carries a lot of other suggestive data. It provides a recipe, so to speak, for cats.

J&B

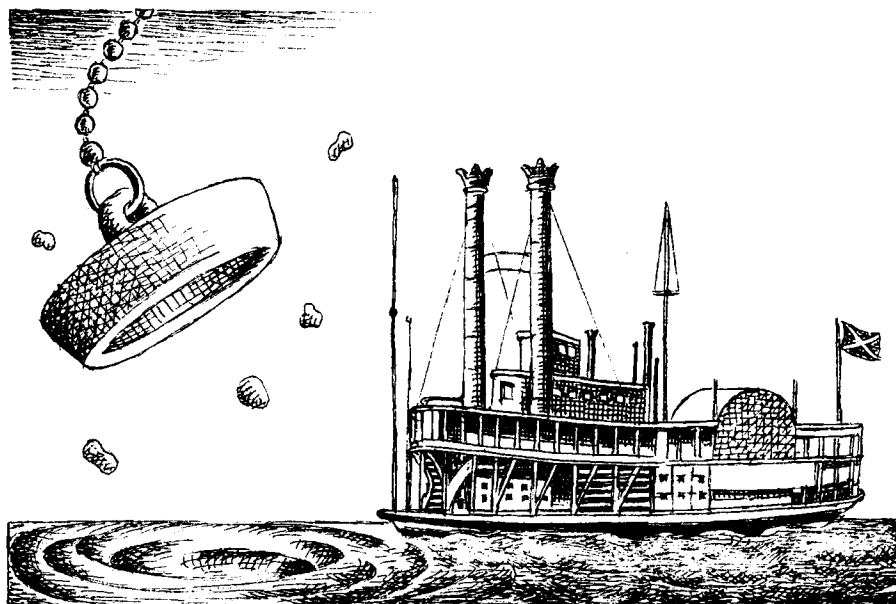
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I do not propose that we attempt to redress the balance. To be sure, I can imagine certain developments, such as a dramatic worsening of the many social and physical ills with which dogs so nobly help us cope, that might foster a resurgence of the canine population, but this prospect is not, on the whole, very inviting. By the same token, I can imagine expedient ways of reducing the feline population to rough parity with the canine one, although perhaps not without harm to the country's liberal demo-

cratic traditions. In the end, I think, there is no turning back the clock. As one who has shaken hands with Rin Tin Tin, I mourn the loss of what was good about dog America. But I accept the inevitability of cat America, and all that this implies about life-styles and public policy. I will be surprised indeed if, after the electorate has spoken in 1988, the next First Pet enters the White House on anything other than little cat feet.

—Cullen Murphy



NEW ORLEANS HARD TIMES IN THE BIG EASY

A portrait of a city that is fast losing its feeling of immunity from the discontents of urban life

WHEN I WAS growing up, in New Orleans, it was a given that by all conventional measures of civic accomplishment my home town ranked low. Every so often some national organization would conduct a survey of cities, ranking them according to crime rate, school test scores, per capita income, park acreage, and so on. New Orleans always came out 89th, or 103rd. This was not a cause for alarm to me, except perhaps insofar as it kept us from getting professional sports franchises. I was raised to believe that New Orleans was so vastly superior to other places in the realms that really mattered—which were charm, a sense of history, pop-cul-

ture vibrance, and the pleasurable-ness of life—that these periodic low ratings were inconsequential, or a sign that the rest of the country was on the wrong track. There were always a few Jeremiahs (usually professors or corporate executives—that is to say, people who were “not local”) who urged New Orleans to reform and become more like Atlanta and Houston, but it seemed that each one, within a few years of issuing his warning, found a job in another town. Real New Orleanians didn’t listen to them. Who *wanted* to be like Houston, where, at the time, the buildings were ugly and you couldn’t get a mixed drink?

Last fall is the first time that I can remember when New Orleans’s supreme confidence about itself seemed to be truly shaken. The city was suffering through the oil bust along with Texas, Oklahoma, and the rest of Louisiana, but it had also been visited by a series of more particular misfortunes. The 1984 Louisiana World Exposition, much publicized both as a tourist attraction and as a chance to restore New Orleans’s old

brick warehouse district, had fallen humiliatingly short of its attendance projections. Then it had gone bankrupt. So had a couple of the familiar old family-run department stores, Godchaux’s and Kreeger’s. So had perhaps the only billionaire in Louisiana, an oilman named Ken G. Martin. The governor, Edwin W. Edwards, had been tried twice on charges that he had accepted bribes in exchange for granting certificates of need to hospitals, and a jury to which he had played with shameless populist *brio* had acquitted him.

Louisiana had, and still has, the highest unemployment rate in the country, now 12 percent (the rate in Texas is just over eight percent). The state and the city were both running budget deficits; New Orleans’s new mayor, Sidney Barthelemy, just in his first six months in office, had laid off 1,100 city employees and put the rest on a four-day work week to save money. Though everybody agrees that the poor quality of New Orleans’s public schools is the city’s greatest problem, the voters in September had defeated a proposal to raise property taxes to help the schools. The Port of New Orleans had begun to run a deficit too, and it had renegotiated its union contracts and lowered its rates. Property values were dropping. The symphony was teetering on the brink. Odessa Texas, has a symphony!

In December there was a crime wave that had the city obsessed: it dominated the television news shows, the pages of *The Times-Picayune*, and all conversations. The actual rate of crime, except for auto theft, was at about the average of the preceding decade, but a series of armed robberies had struck at the core of the New Orleans subconscious, where reside feelings about social life, the family homestead, and relations between the races: in the stately, calm Uptown section, where the white establishment lives, a group of black teenagers, in succession of stolen cars, were following people home from parties and holding them up at gunpoint on their own doorsteps. One well-known man was shot in the head. Another lost an eye to a robber’s bullet.

A poll commissioned by *The Times-Picayune* showed that 71 percent of whites and 78 percent of blacks felt that crime was up from a year before, and fully 55 percent of the whites polled said that a friend had recently been a victim of crime. Bankers and partners in the law firms began carrying guns to parties

where, even in daytime, armed security guards had become a fixture. A few pillars of the community actually packed meat at work in their high-rise offices. Crime conveys the feeling that things are falling apart with an immediacy that the gloomiest economic statistic will never have, but surely it was the background of New Orleans's many other troubles that made the crime wave so alarming.

By January the police were back to a five-day week and had announced that they had caught the perpetrators of the Uptown armed robberies. New Orleans rept back from whatever brink it had been on. In fact, it immediately voted down another proposed tax increase, his time for more police and fire protection. There isn't any longer the sense that life is in immediate danger of becoming untenable, and when visitors come (for the 1988 Republican Convention, for instance), the city will be able to slip smoothly into its familiar funky aloof charm, the attitude that gave rise to its favorite nickname of the moment, "the Big Easy." Still, there's a deep-seated feeling that the current problems are different from all earlier ones—that they will leave New Orleans much worse off, or drastically changed, or both.

FROM AFAR IT appears that the price of oil has been the most important factor in the life of New Orleans over the last ten or fifteen years. But oil hasn't affected the character of the city nearly as much as two shifts that took place during the time of the oil boom and bust: one in political power, from whites to blacks, and the other in New Orleans's economic base, from the port to tourism.

Politics in New Orleans is conducted more in the manner of a northern or Latin American city than of a Sun Belt one. It's taken seriously as a profession and an art form. People enjoy election campaigns—what with second primaries, elected judges, and bond issues, there always seems to be one going on—and politics attracts smart, tough, ambitious people, not disinterested patricians and public-spirited businessmen.

For years political power lay primarily with the Regular Democratic Organization, a white, blue-collar machine whose stronghold was the neighborhoods along the river where the longshoremen lived. But the Voting Rights Act and white flight doomed the Old Regulars. In their

place rose black organizations called SOUL, COUP, and BOLD, each headquartered in a different black neighborhood. In the sixties most white politicians didn't see that these groups were taking over the leadership of black politics from the old-line Baptist ministers, or that in just a few years New Orleans would have a black voting majority (the city is now more than 60 percent black, and the electorate is 52 percent black).

One white politician who brilliantly foresaw the shape of things to come was Moon Landrieu, a city councilman who won the 1970 mayor's race in an upset, on the strength of the support of blacks and Uptown whites. The Landrieu coalition, which was quite similar to the coalition of blacks and affluent whites in Chicago that would elect Harold Washington mayor, seemed to be the future of New Orleans politics. Blacks liked Landrieu because he was the first mayor to renounce segregation—during his two terms he gave blacks hundreds of important jobs in city hall, where previously, it is only a slight exaggeration to say, the only black employees had been janitors and maids. He was popular uptown, too, because he consulted the white social and business establishment more than his predecessor had and because, as an articulate racial liberal, he made New Orleans look good nationally.

In the 1977 election the Landrieu coalition held together to elect a black judge, Ernest "Dutch" Morial, mayor over a white candidate with a working-class base. But by the time of Morial's re-election campaign, in 1982, the tone of local politics had changed. Morial, a canny, proud, imperious, occasionally mean bantam rooster of a man, got crosswise of Uptown, which backed a clean-cut, inexperienced young white candidate against him. He felt that Uptown expected a degree of obeisance from him that it wouldn't have expected from a white mayor. "If anyone didn't warrant opposition, you're looking at him," Morial told me when I visited New Orleans not long ago. He won without getting many white votes, and the morning after the election, in an interview with Allan Katz and Joe Massa, of *The Times-Picayune*, he said, "I don't know why people want me to deal politically differently than any other mayor. Is it because I'm a nigger? Because I'm a nigger, I've got to be shat on by everybody else?"

From then on Morial was the hero of the black poor and the bugaboo of practically all whites. This was an unexpect-

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ed turn of events. Morial is no Jesse Jackson—he and his wife are scions of New Orleans's light-skinned, Catholic black-Creole elite, and he is fairly conservative politically. Many middle-class blacks see him as someone who looks down on nearly everybody of both races, and who assumed a confrontational stance toward whites partly as a matter of political calculation (today, out of power, he works in a white law firm). But Uptown residents, who had been convinced that New Orleans was making an unusually serene progression out of segregation, were horrified. Not just Morial but also whites began to use the word *nigger* again. Morial then embarked on a crusade to change the city charter so that he could run for a third term. This failed in two city referenda. The 1986 mayoral election was really another referendum on Morial, pitting a black candidate backed by him against Sidney Barthelemy, a black city councilman who had endeared himself to whites by leading the fight against the charter change. Barthelemy won by standing the Landrieu coalition on its head. He got 85 percent of the white vote and 35 percent of the black vote, which makes him perhaps the only black mayor in America with a white political base.

As if to prove that the folklore about the relationship between height and personality in men is right, Barthelemy, a Creole like Morial, is tall and nice whereas Morial is short and wily. Morial and Landrieu, who don't get along, illustrate the magnificent style that a politician can achieve. Landrieu chomps cigars, Morial wears a pinky ring, and both can size up a person in an instant and nurse a resentment for decades. Barthelemy hasn't shown yet that he's in that league, and his position is precarious. New Orleans whites have a complicated attitude toward black political power. There will probably never be another white mayor of New Orleans, but that means white voters will have a lot of clout as the swing vote in elections between two black candidates. They're a tricky constituency for a black mayor to manage. Whites in New Orleans pride themselves, in the southern manner, on how well they "understand" black people, but the understanding is usually a paternalistic, patronizing one. They are not ordinarily haters, but they can be, when the racial climate becomes less than perfectly genteel. If the mayor is wholly accommodating to whites, though, he loses points with blacks.

BARTHELEMY HAS cause to worry also about the loyalty of the other part of his constituency, the black middle class, because the city's deficits have forced him to cut away at its economic base—government employment. But middle-class blacks in New Orleans don't seem as wary as one might expect. They are the one group in the city that has gained ground over the past twenty years. New Orleans East, a Houston-like neighborhood of brick tract houses with neat lawns, now has a substantial population of blacks who grew up poor. They've been the principal beneficiaries of the rise of black political power, and they don't find the decline of the port, which never benefited college-educated blacks, so tragic as whites do.

In a sense, the port has been doomed for a very long time, perhaps ever since the advent of railroads reduced the importance of a location at the mouth of the Mississippi River. In recent years New Orleans has been slow to adapt to the age of containerized cargo and was hurt by the shift in American trading patterns to the Pacific, which has made Los Angeles–Long Beach the boom port. The coup de grace was administered, unintentionally, by Congress in 1980, when it passed the Staggers Rail Act, which deregulated railroads. Having never developed a manufacturing base for finishing the goods it imported, New Orleans is a transfer port—most of what's shipped in is immediately shipped out again. As such, it depended on the pre-Staggers Act Interstate Commerce Commission, which could virtually dictate shipping patterns by setting rates. Now much of its former commerce goes through Charleston and Savannah, or skips the cargo-ship stage altogether and goes overland by truck. There are today a third as many jobs on the New Orleans waterfront as there were in the early seventies.

The rise of tourism filled the void left by the decline of the port especially neatly, inasmuch as the tourist industry required the same space the port had been using—the riverfront. Over the past decade the old downtown wharves have closed, one after another, and then been converted to tourist attractions. A waterfront promenade was built across from Jackson Square in the French Quarter; the old Jax Brewery was converted into a shopping-and-eating arcade; a Hilton hotel and a new convention center went up a little upriver, along with a Rouse Company develop-

ment called Riverwalk. Last year, while turning down other tax increases, the voters approved one to finance the conversion of wharf space into an aquarium, and expansion of the convention center is the civic priority of the moment. Barthelemy's vision of the city's progress is almost entirely tourism-related—his great dream is to persuade a national entertainment company to build a theme park in New Orleans.

As late as the sixties the charms of New Orleans were mostly unselfconscious by-products of local history and ethnicity. Now they're becoming the province of marketers going after the convention trade. The locus of traditional jazz has moved from nightclubs to hotels. Festivals (like the new French Quarter Festival) arise not from traditional motives but from the perception that there is a gap to fill in the round of tourist festivities. There is talk of a new streetcar line along the river, not to take people to work but to fulfill tourists' assumption that New Orleans means streetcars. When I was a reporter at an underground newspaper in the French Quarter, during the early seventies, the staffers used to have coffee and beignet (which we called doughnuts, a word that's since been banished because it is not colorful enough) at the Morning Call and red beans and rice at Buster Holmes, both ageless, fabulously seedy establishments whose clienteles ranged effortlessly from heroin addicts to debutantes. Now the Morning Call has moved to swinging-singles suburb called Fat City and Buster Holmes to the "food court" at the Jax Brewery. Such are the wages of the death of the port.

There are non-aesthetic reasons to worry about New Orleans's increasing dependence on tourism. Tourism can enrich a small group of local entrepreneurs, including real-estate developers and concessionaires; some of these come from groups, like the black middle class that were previously shut out of the business life of the city. New entry-level jobs in hotels are cold comfort for unemployed longshoremen, but they are real help to poor blacks working as domestics or not working at all. Still, tourism is cyclical, and it's dominated by national chains whose profits go out of town. And if New Orleans is primarily the business of selling itself rather than its raw materials and its dock facilities, then being a city that satisfies its own requirements but not the outside world might not work anymore.



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IT IS WITHIN New Orleans's and Louisiana's power to cure many of their ills, through means far more direct than the Melanesian cargo-cult method of simply praying for businesses to relocate there. There's already a well-defined reform agenda.

All real power in Louisiana lies with the state government. State subsidies finance a wide range of local services, the most important of which is public education. The reason local governments can't pay for these services is that the state constitution prohibits them from levying income taxes and severely limits their property-tax revenues by exempting from taxes the first \$75,000 of the value of every owner-occupied home. The state gets its money, in accordance with Louisiana's soak-the-rich tradition, primarily from taxes on business. The constitution limits the state income tax to a low rate, but all businesses pay a wide range of taxes (including a notorious inventory tax), and oil companies pay a severance tax, too.

When Edwin Edwards took office, in the early seventies, he shrewdly passed legislation tying the oil severance tax to the price of oil, and the money rolled in. In the 1981-1982 fiscal year 41 percent of the state's revenues came from minerals. Edwards spent this money freely, especially on public employees—Louisiana has more of them per capita than any other southern state—and on pork-barrel construction projects. When the price of oil dropped, however, Louisiana was in trouble.

In the past fiscal year alone, Louisiana's mineral revenues have fallen by 30 percent, and the state ran a deficit of \$206 million the year before that. This money has to be paid back fast, because the constitution outlaws deficits. Louisiana also owes the federal government almost \$1 billion in unpaid unemployment compensation, and its employee pension fund has an unfunded liability of nearly \$5 billion. Early this year the state held up state income tax refunds for several weeks because of what was billed as a "cash-flow problem," and the state legislative fiscal officer announced that Edwards's new budget, submitted as balanced, would actually produce a \$350 million deficit.

Edwards's way out is to institute a state lottery and legalize casino gambling in New Orleans. So far the legislature hasn't gone along with that. Another way is propounded by good-government reformers: reduce or

eliminate the homestead exemption, raise the state income tax, lower sales taxes (the sales tax in New Orleans is a whopping nine percent), and consolidate business taxes—not to mention get rid of Edwards. It's no mystery why the reform agenda hasn't sailed through; taxing individuals more and business less is a hard sell. In particular, the homestead exemption is a sacred cow. There is a depressing entente on the subject of financing public education, under which people with houses worth less than \$75,000 are happy because they don't pay any property tax, and the small fraction of homeowners who do pay property tax are happy because they pay an amount that is among the lowest in the country (\$1,000 a year for a five- or six-bedroom house is typical) and can afford not to send their kids to the bad public schools that are a result, in part, of the low taxes.

The connection between the state's taxing policies and New Orleans's future prosperity, especially as a tourist town, is obvious. Everyone who considers doing business in New Orleans is horrified when he discovers that his employees will have a hard time finding decent public schools for their children, even in the suburbs. Visitors don't want to come back to a city that's dirty and dangerous because it can't afford to provide basic city services; a haunting event in this regard was the murder of a tourist last January in a new public park built specifically to appeal to tourists.

For the past year the leader of the reformist charge has been Jim Bob Moffett, the chairman of the biggest company in town, Freeport-McMoRan. This wouldn't be unusual in any other city, but it is in New Orleans. Moffett is exactly the kind of person New Orleans used to be famous for ignoring: a flamboyant, country-talking, flashy-dressing, Texas-bred oilman whose power base is a Fortune 500 company, not a local family business. Usually people like Moffett end up in Houston or Dallas, where they're the toast of the town, but occasionally the old 1840s dream of living the grand life in the gracious capital of the South will lure one of them to New Orleans.

The previous occupants of the mansion on St. Charles Avenue where Moffett lives seemed proof of the impossibility of an oilman's breaking into the New Orleans social and business establishment: they gave big parties and made substantial donations to good

causes, but they weren't invited to any of the right places. (He ended up serving a jail term and then committing suicide, and she as Gayfryd Steinberg, a society queen in New York, where acceptance comes much faster than it does in New Orleans.)

It's a testament to Moffett's superior drive and to the flagging self-confidence of old-line New Orleans that he has been much more successful than any previous oilman at becoming a civic leader. In 1981 his independent exploration company merged with Freeport Minerals and in 1985 moved its headquarters from New York to a new building across the street from the Louisiana Superdome, with its street number emblazoned in Roman numerals on its entablature. Then he, along with a group of other businessmen, founded an organization called the Business Council, modeled on civic oligarchies like the Citizens Council, in Dallas, and the Vault, in Boston, to whip the city and the state into shape again, and the establishment stepped back to see what he could do. He got a hero's welcome in the press.

Now, however, Moffett is in milc eclipse. Earlier this year a courageous state environmental bureaucrat denied Freeport a permit to dump gypsum into the Mississippi River. Moffett, who seemed to think he had a deal with the state (the governor's brother was once on the Freeport payroll as a lobbyist) blew his stack. He held a press conference in February at which he threatened to move his company away from New Orleans and called Louisiana a banana republic. The epithet stung badly—it had enough truth to it that it had been sort of hanging in the conversational air for a while before he used it publicly and it's particularly wounding to New Orleans pride because it was coined back in the days when a New Orleans-controlled company, United Fruit, was running half of Latin America. Such puissance is a faded, but cherished memory. Iris Kelso, a veteran columnist for *The Times-Picayune*, wrote a few days later, "His ego, his temper and his unbridled tongue ended his days of effective leadership and his right to full public confidence."

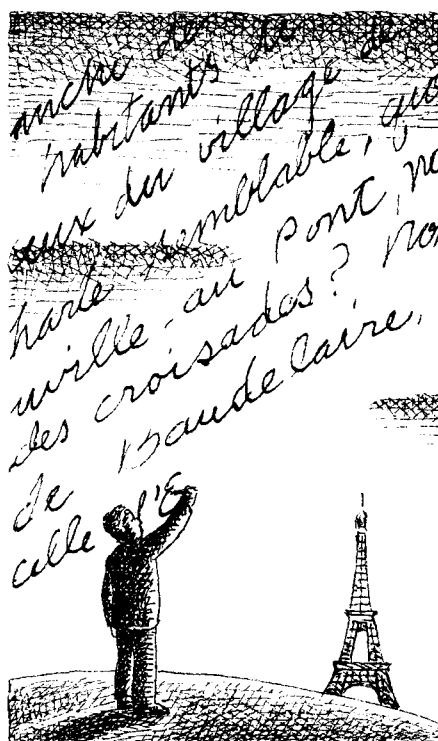
When I met with Moffett, he was full of the old fire. He said that the Business Council, by hammering on the subject of the homestead exemption, had made it acceptable at least to talk about eliminating or lowering it, which is true. Ur

like most native-born New Orleans leaders, he seems to be unwilling just to give up on the public schools. "We have a responsibility to ensure the American way of life," he told me. "We have to make this an *American* city. [As a native, I felt a twinge of reflexive horror at this idea.] If you don't give every kid a chance, the whole system breaks down. You've got to educate the people. You have to believe in the American way of life, and it all starts with educating the masses." He told me that he doesn't really think New Orleans is a banana republic but he's worried that other people will. "Let me put it this way," he said. "Banana republic' is not my *nom de plume*. I said if you make decisions that are not American-type decisions, people will continue to give us that *nom de plume*." New Orleans may not have forgiven him yet, but it hasn't turned his role over to anyone else either.

The question of what the Louisiana political system will do to solve its problems is an immediate one, and not just because of the fiscal crisis. There's a governor's race on. The irrepressible Edwards has attracted an unusually strong field of competitors—three of Louisiana's eight members of Congress, plus the state's secretary of state—but he's running with a breezy confidence that would be hard for many other people in his shoes to maintain. If Edwards wins, the reformers will have to wait for another day—a day four years from now. If the price of oil doesn't rise, who knows what shape the state will be in by then. If anyone else wins, next year's session of the legislature will be an occasion for at least serious attempts at change.

Politics in Louisiana, like life in Louisiana, isn't very often about what it rationally should be about. The opportunity to turn the subject of a campaign from governance to either of the two favorite substitutes, race and the incumbent's flamboyant personality, is well-nigh irresistible. New Orleans took the opportunity in the past two mayoral races, when the issue was Morial and not the city's problems, and now Louisiana as a chance too—Edwards's support is mostly black, and he's certainly richly endowed with personality. No matter who wins, if the campaign could somehow hinge on the future of the state, it could be a concession to the need to be (as!) a little more like the rest of the country—and also a small triumph.

—Nicholas Lemann



PARIS

A NATION OF READERS

The best-seller list in France is a serious affair indeed

IT WOULD BE AN exaggeration, though not very much of one, to say that French publishers live and breathe by *Apostrophes*, a book-chat television show broadcast in prime time every Friday on France's Antenne 2 network. After all, the host of *Apostrophes*, Bernard Pivot, invites only a small percentage of the thousands of authors published each year in France to appear as guests. But Pivot's influence is such that most authors and publishers consider an appearance on his show to be a crucial, if not indispensable, ingredient in the making of *un best seller*. A cultural institution now in its twelfth year, *Apostrophes* is far more influential than the literary salons whose place it has taken. Week by week it defines what might be described as a national required-reading list. It is essential viewing for mandarins of both Left Bank and Right. "Even people who don't watch *Apostrophes* say they do," says Françoise Verny, a prominent editor whose move last year from the Gallimard to the Flammarion publishing company was front-page news. The pro-

gram's impact is especially great within the tightly knit publishing industry, concentrated in the Latin Quarter of Paris. "Publishers are obsessed with getting their authors on *Apostrophes*," says Anne Pons, an editor of the newsmagazine *L'Express*, which compiles France's most credible best-seller list.

Behind this phenomenon is the boyish and genial Pivot, fifty-two, a man with an undisputed talent for extracting anecdote and insight from the most reserved of authors. Eclectic in taste, Pivot likes to group quite disparate titles under an often fanciful thematic heading like "Modesty and Shamelessness" or "Hygiene in France From the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century." He sometimes devotes an entire show to a major figure such as Marguerite Yourcenar, the first female member of the Académie Française. Yet pedantry is foreign to Pivot, who says that his show "must seem like conversation, which unfolds spontaneously." This approach is perhaps why Pivot draws as much as fifteen percent of the Friday-evening audience. That rating, in turn, is why France's *librairies*, or bookshops, stock up on the titles scheduled to be discussed on *Apostrophes*, no matter how abstruse they may seem. Pivot's role is without equivalent in the United States: imagine the combined clout of *The New York Times Book Review* and *Miami Vice*. Only once has anyone questioned the propriety of Pivot's influence. In 1982 the leftist intellectual Régis Debray, an adviser to President François Mitterrand, declared that Pivot had established "a veritable dictatorship over the book market." Mitterrand disavowed Debray's remark.

Pivot, a self-described provincial gourmand from the Beaujolais district, near Lyons, insists that he is no more than "an intermediary between intellectuals and the television audience." It may be that such a role is possible in France because books and authors here are accorded what seems an exceptional importance in national life. In 1979, for instance, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing appeared on *Apostrophes* to discuss a book he had just published. He confided to Pivot that if he had not become President of the Republic he should have liked to be Guy de Maupassant. Some might have considered this presumptuous, given Giscard's modest literary gifts, but most of his countrymen understood the sentiment. France is a nation of readers, and in a nation of readers the writer is an aristocrat.

YOU CAN FIND almost anything in *Quid*, the French omnibus reference work whose contents range from an explanation of probability theory to sports records to estimates of the annual cost of the flu. You can read in *Quid*, for instance, that in France books may be bought at 20,200 stationers, train-station kiosks, newsstands, and tobacconists, as well as in 600 proper bookstores. And that half those bookstores are located in Paris. And that 50 percent of the sales of major new titles of intellectual significance occur within the capital's bohemian or affluent Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Sixteenth arrondissements. And that 44 percent of the adult French population read ten or more books a year and 18 percent read at least twenty-five.

In France, however, best sellers are not always determined in the straightforward manner that they are in the United States. They are usually—though not always—noted in *Les Succès de la Semaine*, the list provided each week by *L'Express*. This is only roughly equivalent to the best-seller list published weekly in *The New York Times Book Review*, for although the magazine surveys eighty bookstores in sixty-six French cities (plus Brussels and Geneva), it does not compile sales figures. Instead it gathers bookstore owners' often subjective notions as to current noteworthy books that are doing well. "Practical" titles—on diet, health, finance, and so on—almost regardless of sales, are ignored on principle. Anne Pons explains, "Those aren't books."

Another peculiarity of the list is its rapid turnover. This reflects the feverish output of the French publishing industry, which commissions and manufactures books at a far brisker pace than American publishers do. The average book is stocked by bookstores for only about twelve weeks. Consequently, success can come and go virtually overnight. So it was with *Dans le secret des princes* (*In the Confidence of Princes*), France's nonfiction success story of 1986. This was a good example of a "*livre d'actualité*," a book that plays off, or creates, news headlines. *Dans le secret des princes* consists of an extended interview with Count Alexandre de Marenches, the director of the French equivalent of the CIA for eleven years under Presidents Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. His interlocutor was Christine Ockrent, a popular and respected radio and television journalist.

Marenches made few true revelations.

He did tell Ockrent that the Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure, the agency he once ran, possessed bushels of Gestapo documents that had never been examined, and he claimed that their contents might modify several established reputations, causing veterans of the Resistance to bristle. Nonetheless, controversy sells, in France as elsewhere, and it was unusual for a former top French intelligence officer to speak publicly at all. Marenches's book sold 450,000 copies within six weeks of its publication, last September—a phenomenal performance. (Only about a dozen U.S. authors in 1986 sold as many copies of their books as Marenches did of his. To put that in perspective, remember that the difference in size between the two countries makes a sale of 450,000 in France equivalent to a sale of two million in the United States. Bill Cosby's *Fatherhood*, the best-selling U.S. nonfiction title last year, sold 2.4 million copies, but it did so not in six weeks but over the course of seven months.) The Marenches book really took off after its subject was featured on *Apostrophes*. His bushy eyebrows knowingly cocked, a red Légion d'Honneur pip in his lapel, Marenches was the embodiment of Gallic gray eminence.

Aside from fiction, what the French read most is politics and history; they never tire of books about their political and social system. These frequently offer explanations of why it works so badly. One notable example of this genre was *Toujours Plus! (Always More!)*, an indictment of corporatism—meaning the fragmentation of French society into its component economic interest groups—by the essayist François de Closets. Published in 1982, it sold 1.2 million copies. Closets followed up with a stern look at French trade unionism titled *Tous ensemble (All Together)*, which put him at the top of the *Express* list again, at the end of 1985.

Alphonse Boudard, a journalist, enjoyed some success last year with a mixture of nostalgia and social history, in *La Fermeture (Closing Time)*. This told the story of the shutdown of the Parisian brothels in 1946 by the bluenose parliamentarian Marthe Richard. More contemporary in its subject was *Tête de Turc (Turk's Head)*, a translation of *Ganz Unten (At the Very Bottom)*, by the German investigative journalist Günter Wallraff. This *Black Like Me*-style exposé of the exploitation of Turkish immigrant workers by German industrialists sold

130,000 copies last year. It remained on the *Express* list for an extraordinary twenty-five weeks. France has its own troubles with immigration from Algeria and other North and West African countries, so a certain guilt factor was undoubtedly involved. But one also suspects that the French took some satisfaction in reading about the sins of a not always friendly neighbor.

The average Frenchman believes, with good reason, that his government does not always tell him the truth. An entire genre of high-level exposés, known as *enquêtes*, and typically better documented than *livres d'actualité*, work this rich vein. One recent example is *Enquête sur trois secrets d'État (Inquiry Into Three State Secrets)*. Its authors, the journalists Jacques Derozy and Jean-Marie Pontaut, examined the *Rainbow Warrior* affair (in which France's not-so-covert sinking of a Greenpeace protest vessel in New Zealand provoked a major governmental crisis) and two other instances in which state secrecy was invoked to cover wrongdoing or incompetence. *La Nomenklatura française (The French Nomenklatura)*, by the journalists Alexandre Wickham and Sophie Coignard, described the permanent ruling class of the Republic in terms derived from an earlier best seller, about privilege in the Soviet Union, *La Nomenklatura*, by the Russian émigré Michael Voslensky. Another recent book appealing to French readers' enduring curiosity about the Soviet Union was *Le K.g.b. en France*, by the journalist Thierry Wolton. Published in 1985, this book explained why Mitterrand was moved to expel some fifty Soviet diplomats from France two years earlier.

A major legislative election was held in March of 1986, costing Mitterrand his control of the National Assembly, and a presidential election is due in 1988. Books about contemporary domestic politics have abounded and will continue to do so until the presidential election is finished and its implications are thoroughly explored. One of the most successful political titles of 1986 was *Dimanche, 16 mars 1986, 20 heures (Sunday March 16, 1986, 8 P.M.)*, by Christine Clerc, a reporter for the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*. Published before the 1986 elections, the book presented a scenario (now largely come to pass) for *la cohabitation*—the political coexistence of the Socialist President Mitterrand and the incoming conservatives, led by the new Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac.

After Chirac was installed as Prime Minister, Maurice Duverger's *Bréviaire de la cohabitation* (*A Cohabitation Handbook*) was published, essential reading for anyone confused by the prospect of a government that was left and right at the same time. The upcoming presidential election, which must be held by May of 1988, has already induced a new crop of political books. *Le V^e Président* (*The Fifth President*), by the political commentator Alain Duhamel, offers portraits of ten *presidentiables*, or potential successors to Mitterrand. The "after Mitterrand" genre even includes a whodunit—*Meurtre à l'Élysée* (*Murder at the Élysée*), by the pseudonymous Jean Duchateau, which revolves around the fatal shooting, at the presidential palace, of Mitterrand himself.

For the French, statesmanship and authorship go hand in hand. ("Govern without writing?" the magazine *Lire* [*To Read*] once speculated, concluding immediately: "Impossible!") Some politicians take this to heart and actually write their own books; some of the results are even worth reading. Giscard and Pompidou received generally lukewarm notices for their political and personal reflections, but Mitterrand got high marks for his, titled *La Paille et le grain* (*The Wheat and the Chaff*). Charles de Gaulle is the standard by which all others are measured. Each of the five volumes of his memoirs was a best seller, and collectively they sold 3.8 million copies.

HISTORY, ESPECIALLY in the form of biography, is a mainstay of the *Express* best-seller list. One recent success in the long line of them was *Louis XIV*, a revisionist biography of the Sun King by the historian François Bluche, which limbed up the chart as Jean Orieux's *Catherine de Médicis* was coming down. Figuring prominently at the end of 1986 was the third and final volume of Jean Lacouture's monumental *De Gaulle*. The subjects of other successful biographies in recent years have included Victor Hugo, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Mitterrand. One recent and provocative biography, an English translation of which will appear this year in the United States, was published by an intimate adviser to Mitterrand, the Socialist economist Jacques Attali. His flattering study of Siegmund Warburg, the financier and consummate capitalist, struck many on the left as inconsistent with Attali's participation in a socialist government.

The vogue in biography, according to

Pierre Lepape, a book critic at *Le Monde*, was launched a decade ago by the English historian Murray Kendall's study of Louis XI, which sold about 100,000 copies in translation. Now every major publisher has a line of biographies to satisfy the French taste for history in the grand old style—what Lepape calls "novels that are true."

Pure history also does well, especially when it concerns one of the so-called *grands sujets* that continue to nourish controversy, among them the French Revolution and the Second World War. A fixture of French middle-class living rooms is the *bibliothèque*. Anyone with an hour of high school French knows that *bibliothèque* means "library," but here it denotes an imposing floor-to-ceiling glassed-in bookcase. Those shelves have to be filled, and Lacouture's complete oeuvre on De Gaulle will take up a good six or seven inches. Then there is the five-volume *Histoire de la Résistance en France*, by Henri Noguères, and the seven-volume series on the Occupation, by Henri Amouroux, which together will fill another eighteen inches or so. One long-running title on the *Express* list last year was *L'Identité de la France: Espace et histoire* (*The Identity of France: Territory and History*), a weighty tome by the late French historian Fernand Braudel, which was rapidly succeeded on the list this year by a companion volume, *Les Hommes et les choses* (*Men and Things*). Books like this become best sellers with surprising frequency. As Lepape explains: "There are some books one must have in one's home."

French readers have a voracious appetite for works of organized and authoritative fact. It is no coincidence that the encyclopedia was invented by a Frenchman, Denis Diderot. Parisian Métro riders have long diverted themselves with the *Que sais-je?* (*What Do I Know?*) paperback summaries of various disciplines. *Quid* and the *Petit Larousse illustré* dictionary together sell 1.5 million copies every year. In 1986 Larousse brought out an ambitiously titled volume, *Chronique de l'humanité* (*The Chronicle of Humanity*). The success of this breadbox-sized reference work has already spawned imitators.

Another current vogue is for works of popularized science. Among the first of these books was Jean-Pierre Changeux's *L'Homme neuronal* (*Neural Man*), a dissertation on the brain and nervous system, which sold 550,000 copies in 1983. Two strong performers last year were

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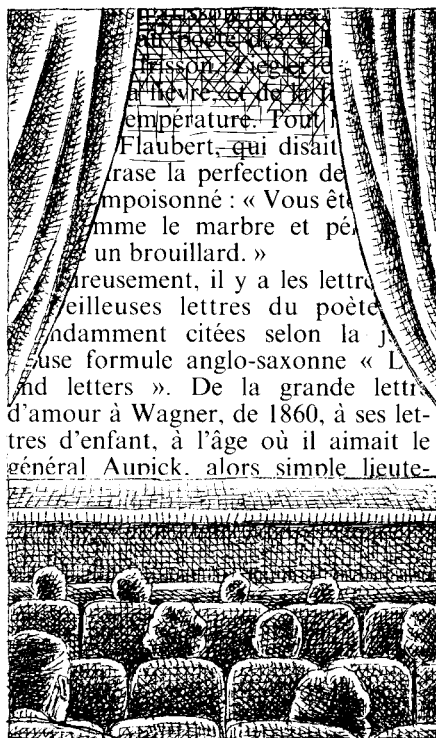
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L'Un est l'autre (*One Is the Other*), an essay on human sexuality by Elisabeth Baudin, the wife of a former Socialist Minister of Justice, and *Biologie des passions* (*The Biology of Passion*), by the neurophysiologist Jean-Didier Vincent. The publisher Le Seuil has a whole line of scientific titles edited by Odile Jacob, the daughter of the French biologist and Nobel laureate François Jacob. A collection of autobiographical essays by the scientist himself, *La Statue intérieure* (*The Interior Statue*), rose high on the *Express* list last spring.

Occult and self-help titles often do very well—so much so that sometimes even *L'Express* can't ignore them. One major 1981 title was *Les Prédications de Nostradamus*, which presented the sixteenth-century French seer's prophecies along with a modern commentary. Because of a purported connection between certain prophecies and the ascent to power of Mitterrand's Socialists that year, the book became a national event and sold 400,000 copies. Weight-loss and exercise books hold but faint appeal for the French, who prefer to read about eating well. The biggest nonfiction hit in recent memory addressed two national preoccupations: health and food. *Ma Médecine naturelle*, a fitness-through-nutrition guide by the popular singer Rika Zaraï, sold 1.8 million copies *en librairie*—that is, in its initial trade edition. The book remained on Les Succès de la Semaine, in *L'Express*, for a remarkable forty-eight weeks.

MOST OF THE major French publishers—Gallimard, Grasset, Le Seuil, Flammarion, and Albin-Michel—jealously guard their printing and sales figures, and any figures released tend to be inflated. Marianne Grangié, the editor-in-chief of the trade weekly *Livres Hebdo*, says, "Every publisher claims that the others are all lying." But the truth will out over lunch at Fernand or drinks at Deux Magots, and a rough scale of values obtains. Respectable sales begin at around 5,000 or 6,000 copies for a first novel. Fiction is judged pretty successful if it sells 40,000 or 50,000 copies. The threshold for nonfiction is set somewhat lower, at 20,000 or 30,000. While the editors of *L'Express*, as noted, do not base their best-seller list on solid sales figures, many of the books on the list achieve a sale of at least 100,000 before their run is through. Anything over 300,000 is a *phénomène*.

In sheer numerical terms, the land-



mark nonfiction book in France was, until recently, Henri Charrière's *Papillon*, the story of the author's escape from the Devil's Island penal colony in French Guiana, published in 1966. It sold more than a million copies (not including book club sales or *poche*—meaning "pocket," this term being preferred to the French word for "paperback," inasmuch as relatively few French trade titles are hardbound). Now Charrière's record has been broken by Zaraï's nutrition hit. On the fiction side, *La Peste* (*The Plague*), by Albert Camus, is commonly cited by French publishers as the all-time best seller, at 2.5 million copies. But *Quid* states that Camus's *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*) is the real champion, having sold 3.5 million copies exclusive of clubs and *poche*.

As these numbers suggest, novels consistently outsell nonfiction books. Popular tastes run to the romantic and the picaresque. French readers, according to Lepape, of *Le Monde*, like "thick novels set in another time, another place." In the past decade the multi-volume saga has enjoyed a vogue, as it has in the United States. The trend was kicked off in 1977 by Maurice Denuzière's *Louisiane*, the first of three volumes of a family chronicle set in and around New Orleans. *Louisiane*, trading on the Cajun French connection, sold 800,000 copies. Its publisher, the Jean-Claude Lattès company, has assiduously developed other blockbusters. Nicole

Lattès, the managing director, was intrigued by a nonfiction work on Breton seafarers and asked the author, Irène Frain, for a novel à la James Clavell about a nineteenth-century sailor from Quimper who made his fortune in India. The result, *Le Nabab*, sold 300,000 copies on publication in 1982. Probably the most successful work in this genre was *La Bicyclette bleue* (*The Blue Bicycle*), a family saga set in wartime France, along lines similar to those of *Gone With the Wind* (so similar, in fact, that a copyright-infringement suit resulted). It sold about 800,000 copies *en librairie* and another million and a half through France's very large book clubs.

But numbers are not everything. Publishers, writers, and readers share the belief that books should have something to do with literature. Where novels are concerned, true distinction is summed up in the phrase "*les Goncourtables*," meaning books worthy of consideration for the Prix Goncourt or other awards bestowed every November. There is a clear division between "literary" books and all the others. The middle ground, held in Anglo-American publishing by narrative writers like Paul Theroux and John Irving, and genre masters like John Le Carré and Elmore Leonard, seems sparsely populated in France—yet a significant number of works of real distinction achieve wide popular success every year.

Few have done this as handily as the Marguerite Duras novel *L'Amant* (*The Lover*). Its first printing, in September of 1984, by the small but venerable Éditions de Minuit, was a mere 25,000 copies. By the time it won the Goncourt, two months later, 200,000 copies had been sold; the figure soared to 750,000 by the year's end. *L'Amant*'s success illustrates why serious literature has proved of enduring value to French publishers. Prizes like the Goncourt, the Fémina, the Médicis, the Renaudot and the Interallié reward publisher commercially for bringing forth quality works. The Prix Goncourt, which is the most prestigious of the awards, typically assures further sales of at least 120,000 copies. The prizewinners as a group dominate the *Express* fiction list well into spring.

BERNARD PIVOT gives the various prizes their due, assembling the winners each year on a special show. But in fact his program has a far greater impact on the general book-buying publi-

than the prizes do. Mere selection for *Apostrophes*, which is announced ten days beforehand, boosts bookshop orders and sales. In many instances a pleasing appearance by a telegenic author has assured the commercial success of a book. The editor Françoise Verny recalls the appearance a few years back of a swashbuckler named Cizia Zykë, the author of an autobiographical account of gold-prospecting in South America, titled *Oro*. "You thought he was going to pull out his Colt and lay it on the table," Verny said. The next day the bookstores saw a run on Zykë's book.

L'effet Pivot—the Pivot effect—was evident more recently in the somewhat surprising success of *La Force de l'amour* (*The Force of Love*), a work of autobiographical reflection by the late French businessman and prominent Freemason Michel Baroin. The president of a large insurance company and of the retail chain FNAC, Baroin was known for an uncommon spiritualism and moral concern. By the time he died, last February, in a plane crash in Zaire, Baroin had come to be regarded by many of his countrymen as a kind of wise man, exemplifying what the French refer to as *la vie associative*. Upon the posthumous publication of *La Force de l'amour*, Baroin's son François went on *Apostrophes* to talk about his father. The fragility and sincerity of the youth, who appeared to possess something of his father's character, struck a deep chord in viewers and lifted the book to the top of the *Express* list last April.

Possibly *Apostrophes* could happen only in France. The Americans and the British prefer their book talk in black and white, in neat and definitive review columns. The Germans talk endlessly on television, about books among other things, but never seem to have much fun doing it. For the French, however, *Apostrophes* offers the entertainment value of witty, erudite conversation and the personal rapport they desire with the writers they admire. Pivot diverts his viewers and, more important, brings them closer to the writers they read—and vice versa. In Zykë's case and that of François Baroin, *le courant est passé*, as they like to say in France: the current passed. They had instinctively followed the advice Pivot once issued to those who find themselves in the guests' chairs in his austere set: "Be yourself; speak with sincerity and, if possible, with assion."

—Brendan Murphy

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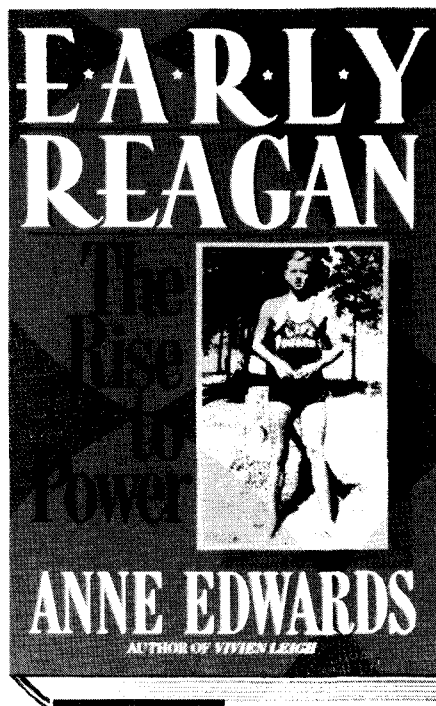
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William Morrow

MY STORE OF GRIEVANCES

BY JOHN WELTER

WHAT I'M GOING to call my new chain of convenience stores that will make me rich is Get It and Get Out.

I asked Dr. Joyce Brothers about the name and she said, "If you want to make your customers feel unwelcome and drive them away, you should use that name." I do, and so I will. Once I start my new chain of Get It and Get Out stores, I'll pledge to the customers, "Poor service and high prices." I'll have a big neon sign in blue and orange letters and artsy glass that says WE'RE OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY AND WE HATE IT.

Psychology like that is essential in a convenience store, and I'll probably put up a sign that says, OUR PRICES ARE HIGH AND WE DON'T CARE. I think the customers will find that irresistible, and if they don't, it just doesn't matter. Almost certainly I'll put up a huge neon sign in blue and yellow that says, WE'RE GOING TO CHEAT YOU, AND SO WHAT? I like neon. Whether the customers do doesn't interest me.

Here's what might happen in my store. A woman (I could use a man, but I thought of a woman first, all right?) would walk up to the checkout counter with a small box of noodles and say, "Isn't this pretty high, a dollar ten for a small box of noodles?"

I'd say, "That's not so bad. Our prices change without notice, and uh-oh—now those noodles cost two dollars."

The woman would be furious and say, "This is outrageous."

"Ma'am," I'd say, "I'm not responsible for your mood swings. This is a convenience store. Do you know what that means? It means we can cheat you however we feel like it." Then I'd point behind me to the purple-and-red neon sign on the wall that says OUTRAGED CUSTOMERS WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE.

As for my staff, I'll hire people who don't know arithmetic, so that if a question ever arises about a customer's being charged the wrong price, the clerks will say, "I don't know arithmetic. It's store policy." I will make sure that most of my clerks have never operated a cash register before, so my store will have long lines of irritated customers watching my clerks stare blankly at the cash register as if they had been told never to understand why they were hired.

If that doesn't sufficiently interfere with progress, I'll insist that my clerks talk on the phone with their boyfriends or girlfriends and regard customers as intruders. Instead of hiring good-natured, conscientious people who know you have to work for a living, I'll carefully screen the applicants in search of people who will behave as if they think their job is demeaning and not worth taking seriously and who will let you know it.

When a customer gets angry and demands to speak to the manager, my clerks will be trained to say, "He ain't here. Never is."

If a customer then says, "I insist on seeing the manager. Where is he?" the standard answer from my clerks will be,

"He's out somewhere gettin' a new neon sign that says EVERYTHING WE SELL COSTS TOO MUCH."

My stores will sell soft drinks in wax-paper cups that don't have lids to fit them. "Do you have any lids to fit these cups?" a customer will ask.

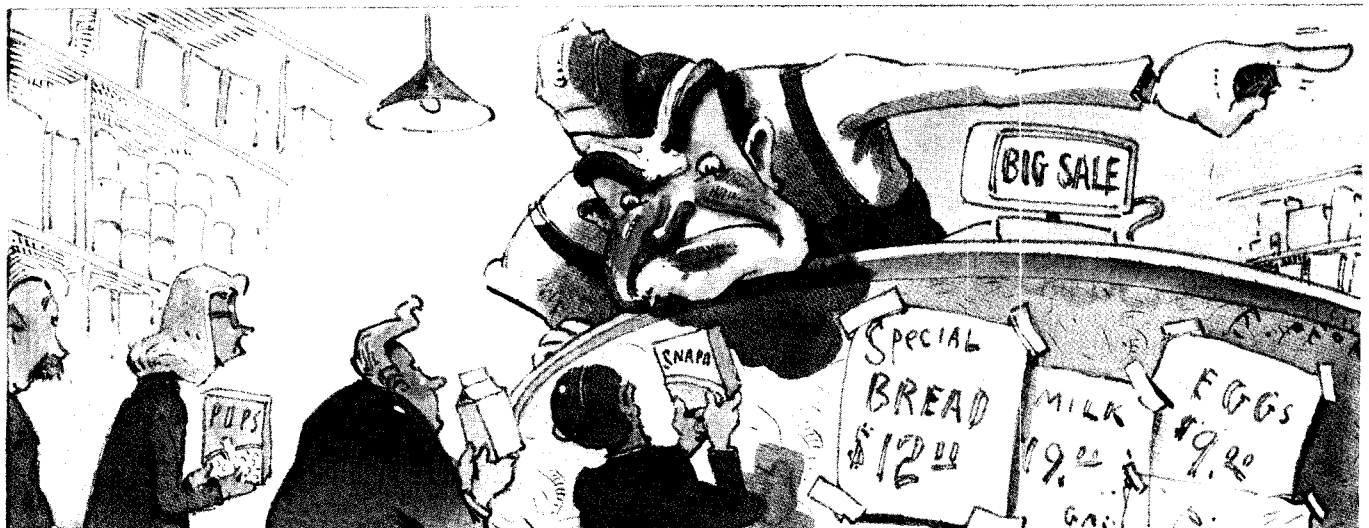
"No," my clerks will reply. "Manager says it's cheaper to buy lids that don't fit."

As a strict store policy, we will always be out of drinking straws. When a customer says, "Do you have any more straws?" the clerks will say, "I'll go back in the back and look." Then the clerks will disappear into the back of the store for at least two minutes, where they'll maybe look at magazines or make calls to their girlfriends. After that they'll return sluggishly to the checkout counter and say, "Couldn't find 'em."

From time to time a customer might feel neglected or unappreciated, and he or she will say angrily, "Doesn't this store's management care about its customers?"

"Of course we do," I'll say, and I'll point to the big neon sign in red and lavender letters that says WE FEEL THAT THE CUSTOMER IS A CONDUIT OF MONEY.

And here's an important emotional touch that will be featured in all of my Get It and Get Out stores. Once a customer has paid for all of his items and the goods are placed in a sack that's too small and rips open, the clerks will say, "Now get lost." □



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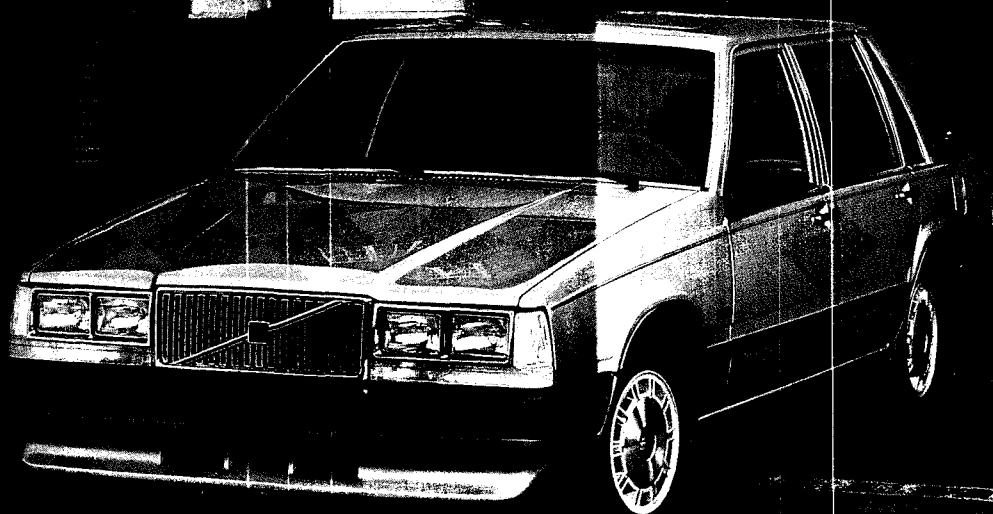
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In 1945 the United States commanded a 40 percent share of the world economy; today its share is half that, and yet our military commitments have grown dramatically. This imbalance, which conforms to a classic historical pattern, threatens our security, both military and economic

THE (RELATIVE) DECLINE OF AMERICA

BY PAUL KENNEDY

The Erosion of U.S. Grand Strategy

IN FEBRUARY OF 1941, WHEN HENRY LUCE'S *LIFE* MAGAZINE announced that this was the "American century," the claim accorded well with the economic realities of power. Even before the United States entered the Second World War, it produced about a third of the world's manufactures, which was more than twice the production of Nazi Germany and almost ten times that of Japan. By 1945, with the Fascist states defeated and America's war-time allies economically exhausted, the U.S. share of world manufacturing output was closer to half—a proportion never before or since attained by a single nation. More than any of the great world empires—Rome, Imperial Spain, or Victorian Britain—the United States appeared destined to dominate international politics for decades, if not centuries, to come.

In such circumstances it seemed to American decision-makers natural (if occasionally awkward) to extend U.S. military protection to those countries pleading for help in the turbulent years after 1945. First came involvement in Greece and Turkey; and then, from 1949 onward, the extraordinarily wide-ranging commitment to NATO; the special relationship with Israel and, often contrarily, with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and lesser Arab states; and obligations to the partners in such regional defense organizations as SEATO, CENTO, and ANZUS. Closer to home, there was the Rio Pact and the special hemispheric defense arrangements with Canada. By early 1970, as Ronald Steel has pointed out, the United States "had more than 1,000,000 soldiers in 30 countries, was a member of 4 regional defense alliances and an active participant in a fifth, had mutual defense treaties with 42 nations, was a member of 53 international organizations, and was furnishing military or economic aid to nearly 100 nations across the face of the globe." Although the end of the Vietnam War significantly reduced the number of American troops overseas, the global array of U.S. obligations that remained would have astonished the Founding Fathers.

Yet while America's commitments steadily increased after 1945, its share of world manufacturing and of world gross national product began to decline, at first rather slowly, and then with increasing speed. In one sense, it

could be argued, such a decline is irrelevant: this country is nowadays far richer, absolutely, than it was in 1945 or 1950, and most of its citizens are much better off *in absolute terms*. In another sense, however, the shrinking of America's share of world production is alarming because of the implications for American grand strategy—which is measured not by military forces alone but by their integration with all those other elements (economic, social, political, and diplomatic) that contribute toward a successful long-term national policy.

The gradual erosion of the economic foundations of America's power has been of several kinds. In the first place, there is the country's industrial decline relative to overall world production, not only in older manufactures, such as textiles, iron and steel, shipbuilding, and basic chemicals, but also—though it is harder to judge the final outcome at this stage of industrial-technological combat—in robotics, aerospace technology, automobiles, machine tools, and computers. Both areas pose immense problems: in traditional and basic manufacturing the gap in wage scales between the United States and newly industrializing countries is probably such that no efficiency measures will close it; but to lose out in the competition in future technologies, if that indeed should occur, would be even more disastrous.

The second, and in many ways less expected, sector of decline is agriculture. Only a decade ago experts were predicting a frightening global imbalance between food requirements and farming output. But the scenarios of famine and disaster stimulated two powerful responses: the first was a tremendous investment in American farming from the 1970s onward, fueled by the prospect of ever larger overseas food sales; the second was a large-scale investigation, funded by the West, into scientific means of increasing Third World crop outputs. These have been so successful as to turn growing numbers of Third World countries into food exporters, and thus competitors of the United States. At the same time, the European Economic Community has become a major producer of agricultural surpluses, owing to its price-support system. In consequence, experts now refer to a "world awash in food," and

this state of affairs in turn has led to sharp declines in agricultural prices and in American food exports—and has driven many farmers out of business.

Like mid-Victorian Britons, Americans after 1945 favored free trade and open competition, not just because they held that global commerce and prosperity would be advanced in the process but also because they knew that they were most likely to benefit from a lack of protectionism. Forty years later, with that confidence ebbing, there is a predictable shift of opinion in favor of protecting the domestic market and the domestic producer. And, just as in Edwardian Britain, defenders of the existing system point out that higher tariffs not only might make domestic products *less* competitive internationally but also might have other undesirable repercussions—a global tariff war, blows against American exports, the undermining of the currencies of certain newly industrializing countries, and an economic crisis like that of the 1930s.

Along with these difficulties affecting American manufacturing and agriculture has come great turbulence in the nation's finances. The uncompetitiveness of U.S. industrial products abroad and the declining sales of agricultural exports have together produced staggering deficits in visible trade—\$160 billion in the twelve months ending with April of 1986—but what is more alarming is that such a gap can no longer be covered by American earnings on “invisibles,” which are the traditional recourse of a mature economy. On the contrary, the United States has been able to pay its way in the world only by importing ever larger amounts of capital. This has, of course, transformed it from the world's largest creditor to the world's largest debtor nation in the space of a few years.

Compounding this problem—in the view of many critics, causing this problem—have been the budgetary policies of the U.S. government itself.

Federal Deficit, Debt, and Interest (in billions)

	<u>Deficit</u>	<u>Debt</u>	<u>Interest on Debt</u>
1980	\$59.6	\$914.3	\$52.5
1983	\$195.4	\$1,381.9	\$87.8
1985	\$202.8	\$1,823.1	\$129.0

A continuation of this trend, alarmed voices have pointed out, would push the U.S. national debt to around \$13 *trillion* by the year 2000 (fourteen times the debt in 1980) and the interest payments on the debt to \$1.5 *trillion* (twenty-nine times the 1980 payments). In fact a lowering of interest rates could make those estimates too high, but the overall trend is still very unhealthy. Even if federal deficits could be reduced to a “mere” \$100 billion annually, the compounding of national debt and interest payments by the early twenty-first century would still cause unprecedented sums of money to be diverted in that direction. The only historical examples that come to mind of Great Powers so increasing their indebtedness *in peacetime* are France in the 1780s, where the fiscal crisis finally led to revolution, and Russia early in this century.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the American economy could have got by without the inflow of foreign funds in the early 1980s, even if that had the awkward consequence of inflating the dollar and thereby further hurting U.S. agricultural and manufacturing exports. But, one wonders, what might happen if those funds are pulled out of the dollar, causing its value to drop precipitously?

Some say that alarmist voices are exaggerating the gravity of what is happening to the U.S. economy and failing to note the “naturalness” of most of these developments. For example, the midwestern farm belt would be much less badly off if so many farmers had not bought land at inflated prices and excessive interest rates in the late 1970s. The move from manufacturing into services is understandable, and is occurring in all advanced countries. And U.S. manufacturing *output* has been rising in absolute terms, even if employment (especially blue-collar employment) in manufacturing has been falling—but that too is a “natural” trend, as the world increasingly moves from material-based to knowledge-based production. Similarly, there is nothing wrong in the metamorphosis of American financial institutions into world financial institutions, with bases in Tokyo and London as well as New York, to handle (and profit from) the heavy flow of capital; that can only increase the nation's earnings from services. Even the large annual federal deficits and the mounting national debt are sometimes described as being not very serious, after allowance is made for inflation; and there exists in some quarters a belief that the economy will “grow its way out” of these deficits, or that government measures will close the gap, whether by increasing taxes or cutting spending or both. A too hasty attempt to slash the deficit, it is pointed out, could well trigger a major recession.

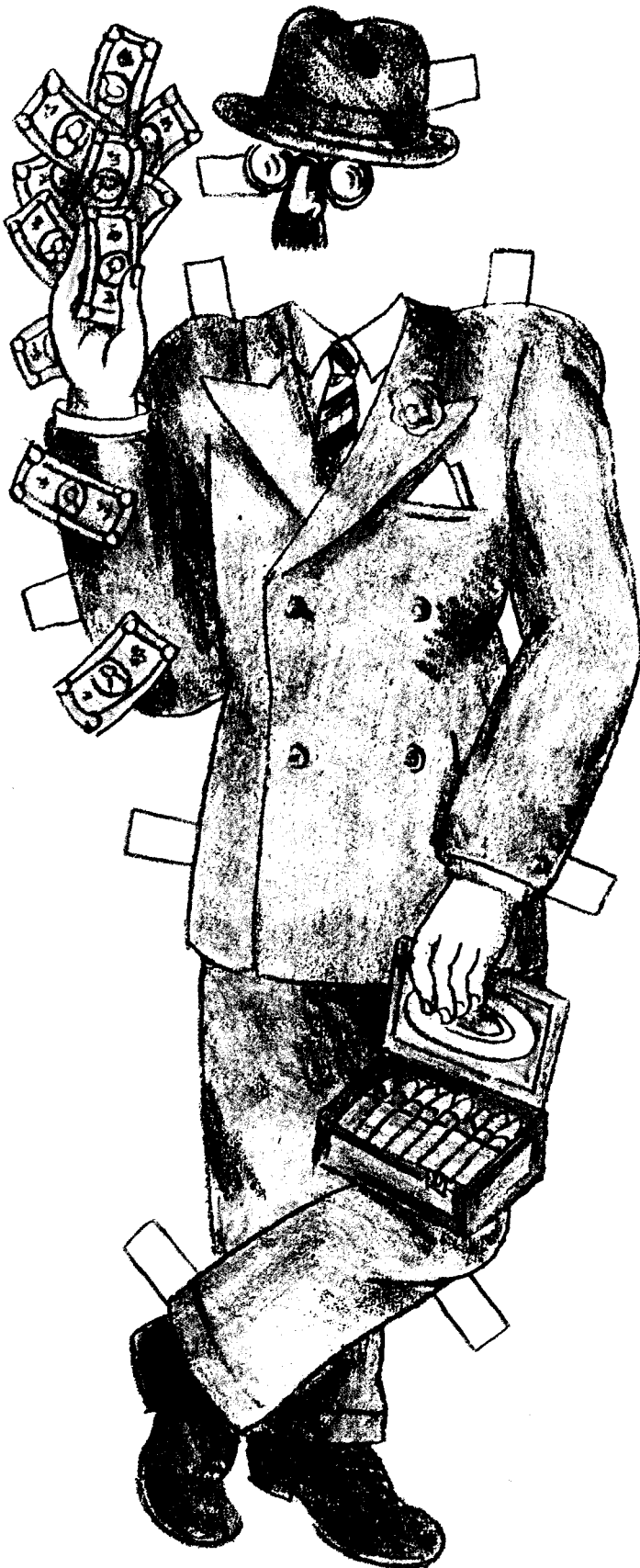
The positive signs of growth in the American economy are said to be even more reassuring. Because of the boom in the service sector, the United States has been creating jobs over the past decade faster than it has done at any time in its peacetime history—and certainly a lot faster than Western Europe has been. America's far greater degree of labor mobility eases such transformations in the job market. Furthermore, the enormous American commitment to high technology—not just in California and New England but also in Virginia, Arizona, and many other places—promises ever greater production, and thus national wealth (as well as ensuring a strategic edge over the Soviet Union). Indeed, it is precisely because of the opportunities existing in the American economy that the nation continues to attract millions of immigrants and to generate thousands of new entrepreneurs, and the capital that pours into the country can be tapped for further investment, especially in research and development. Finally, if long-term shifts in the global terms of trade are, as economists suspect, leading to steadily lower prices for foodstuffs and raw materials, that ought to benefit an economy that still imports enormous amounts of oil, metal ores, and so on (even if it hurts particular American interests, such as farmers and oilmen).

Many of these points may be valid. Since the American economy is so large and diverse, some sectors and regions are likely to be growing while others are in decline—and to characterize the whole with generalizations about “crisis” or “boom” is therefore inappropriate. Given the decline in the price of raw materials, the ebbing of the dollar’s unsustainably high exchange value since early 1985, the reduction that has occurred in interest rates, and the impact of all three trends on inflation and on business confidence, it is not surprising that some professional economists are optimistic about the future.

NEVERTHELESS, FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF AMERICAN grand strategy, and of the economic foundation necessary to an effective long-term strategy, the picture is much less rosy. In the first place, America’s capacity to carry the burden of military liabilities that it has assumed since 1945 is obviously less than it was several decades ago, when its shares of global manufacturing and GNP were much larger, its agriculture was secure, its balance of payments was far healthier, the government budget was in balance, and it was not in debt to the rest of the world. From that larger viewpoint there is something in the analogy that is made by certain political scientists between America’s position today and that of previous “declining hegemons.” Here again it is instructive to note the uncanny similarity between the growing mood of anxiety in thoughtful circles in the United States today and that which pervaded all political parties in Edwardian Britain and led to what has been termed the national efficiency movement—a broad-based debate among the nation’s decision-making, business, and educational elites over ways to reverse a growing uncompetitiveness with other advanced societies. In terms of commercial expertise, levels of training and education, efficiency of production, and standards of income and (among the less well off) living, health, and housing, the number-one power of 1900 seemed to be losing its superiority, with dire implications for its long-term strategic position. Hence the calls for “renewal” and “reorganization” came as much from the right as from the left. Such campaigns usually do lead to reforms here and there, but their very existence is, ironically, a confirmation of decline. When a Great Power is strong and unchallenged, it will be much less likely to debate its capacity to meet its obligations than when it is relatively weaker.

In particular, there could be serious implications for American grand strategy if the U.S. industrial base continues to shrink. If there were ever in the future to be a large-scale war that remained conventional (because of the belligerents’ fear of triggering a nuclear holocaust), one must wonder, would America’s productive capacities be adequate after years of decline in certain key industries, the erosion of blue-collar employment, and so on? One is reminded of the warning cry of the British nationalist economist Professor W. A. S. Hewins in 1904 about the impact of British industrial decay upon that country’s power:





Suppose an industry which is threatened [by foreign competition] is one which lies at the very root of your system of National defense, where are you then? You could not get on without an iron industry, a great Engineering trade, because in modern warfare you would not have the means of producing, and maintaining in a state of efficiency, your fleets and armies.

It is hard to imagine that the decline in American industrial capacity could be so severe: America's manufacturing base is simply much broader than Edwardian Britain's was, and—an important point—the so-called defense-related industries not only have been sustained by Pentagon procurement but also have taken part in the shift from materials-intensive to knowledge-intensive (high-tech) manufacturing, which over the long term will also reduce the West's reliance on critical raw materials. Even so, the expatriation from the United States of, say, semiconductor assembly, the erosion of the American shipping and shipbuilding industry, and the closing down of so many American mines and oil fields represent trends that cannot but be damaging in the event of another long, Great Power, coalition war. If, moreover, historical precedents have any validity at all, the most critical constraint upon any surge in wartime production will be the number of skilled craftsmen—which causes one to wonder about the huge long-term decline in American blue-collar employment, including the employment of skilled craftsmen.

A problem quite different but equally important for sustaining a proper grand strategy concerns the impact of slow economic growth on the American social-political consensus. To a degree that amazes most Europeans, the United States in the twentieth century has managed to avoid overt "class" politics. This, one imagines, is a result of America's unique history. Many of its immigrants had fled from socially rigid circumstances elsewhere; the sheer size of the country had long allowed those who were disillusioned with their economic position to escape to the West, and also made the organization of labor much more difficult than in, say, France or Britain; and those same geographic dimensions, and the entrepreneurial opportunities within them, encouraged the development of a largely unreconstructed form of laissez-faire capitalism that has dominated the political culture of the nation (despite occasional counterattacks from the left). In consequence, the earnings gap between rich and poor is significantly larger in the United States than in any other advanced industrial society, and state expenditures on social services claim a lower share of GNP than in comparable countries except Japan, whose family-based support system for the poor and the aged appears much stronger.

This lack of class politics despite obvious socio-economic disparities has been possible because the nation's overall growth since the 1930s has offered the prospect of individual betterment to a majority of the population, and, disturbingly, because the poorest third of American society has not been mobilized to vote regularly. But given the different birthrates of whites on the one hand and blacks and

Hispanics on the other, given the changing composition of the flow of immigrants into the United States, given also the economic metamorphosis that is leading to the loss of millions of relatively high-paying jobs in manufacturing, and the creation of millions of poorly paid jobs in services, it may be unwise to assume that the prevailing norms of the American political economy (such as low government social expenditures and low taxes on the rich) would be maintained if the nation entered a period of sustained economic difficulty caused by a plunging dollar and slow growth. An American polity that responds to external challenges by increasing defense expenditures, and reacts to the budgetary crisis by cutting existing social expenditures, runs the risk of provoking an eventual political backlash. There are no easy answers in dealing with the constant three-way tension between defense, consumption, and investment as national priorities.

Imperial Overstretch

THIS BRINGS US, INEVITABLY, TO THE DELICATE RELATIONSHIP between slow economic growth and high defense spending. The debate over the economics of defense spending is a heated one and—bearing in mind the size and variety of the American economy, the stimulus that can come from large government contracts, and the technological spin-offs from weapons research—the evidence does not point simply in one direction. But what is significant for our purposes is the comparative dimension. Although (as is often pointed out) defense expenditures amounted to ten percent of GNP under President Eisenhower and nine percent under President Kennedy, America's shares of global production and wealth were at that time around twice what they are today, and, more particularly, the American economy was not then facing challenges to either its traditional or its high-technology manufactures. The United States now devotes about seven percent of its GNP to defense spending, while its major economic rivals, especially Japan, allocate a far smaller proportion. If this situation continues, then America's rivals will have more funds free for civilian investment. If the United States continues to direct a huge proportion of its research and development activities toward military-related production while the Japanese and West Germans concentrate on commercial research and development, and if the Pentagon drains off the ablest of the country's scientists and engineers from the design and production of goods for the world market, while similar personnel in other countries are bringing out better consumer products, then it seems inevitable that the American share of world manufacturing will decline steadily, and likely that American economic growth rates will be slower than those of countries dedicated to the marketplace and less eager to channel resources into defense.

It is almost superfluous to say that these tendencies place the United States on the horns of a most acute, if long-term, dilemma. Simply because it is *the* global super-

power, with military commitments far more extensive than those of a regional power like Japan or West Germany, it requires much larger defense forces. Furthermore, since the USSR is seen to be the major military threat to American interests around the globe, and is clearly devoting a far greater proportion of its GNP to defense, American decision-makers are inevitably worried about "losing" the arms race with Russia. Yet the more sensible among the decision-makers can also perceive that the burden of armaments is debilitating the Soviet economy, and that if the two superpowers continue to allocate ever larger shares of their national wealth to the unproductive field of armaments, the critical question might soon be, Whose economy will decline *fastest*, relative to the economies of such expanding states as Japan, China, and so forth? A small investment in armaments may leave a globally overstretched power like the United States feeling vulnerable everywhere, but a very heavy investment in them, while bringing greater security in the short term, may so erode the commercial competitiveness of the American economy that the nation will be less secure in the long term.

Here, too, the historical precedents are not encouraging. Past experience shows that even as the relative economic strength of number-one countries has ebbed, the growing foreign challenges to their position have compelled them to allocate more and more of their resources to the military sector, which in turn has squeezed out productive investment and, over time, led to a downward spiral of slower growth, heavier taxes, deepening domestic splits over spending priorities, and a weakening capacity to bear the burdens of defense. If this, indeed, is the pattern of history, one is tempted to paraphrase Shaw's deadly serious quip and say: "Rome fell. Babylon fell. Scarsdale's turn will come."

HOW IS ONE TO INTERPRET WHAT IS GOING ON? AND what, if anything, can be done about these problems? Far too many of the remarks made in political speeches suggest that while politicians worry more than they did about the nation's economic future, they tend to believe that the problems have quick and simple-minded solutions. For example, some call for tariffs—but they fail to address the charge that whenever industry and agriculture are protected, they become less productive. Others urge "competitiveness"—but they fail to explain how, say, American textile workers are to compete with textile workers earning only a twentieth of American wages. Still others put the blame for the decline of American efficiency on the government, which they say takes too much of the national income—but they fail to explain how the Swiss and the Germans, with their far higher tax rates, remain competitive on the world market. There are those who want to increase defense spending to meet perceived threats overseas—but they rarely concede that such a policy would further unbalance the economy. And there are those who want to reduce defense spending—but they rarely suggest

which commitments (Israel? Korea? Egypt? Europe?) should go, in order to balance means and ends.

Above all, there is rarely any sense of the long-term context in which this American dilemma must be seen, or of the blindingly obvious point that the problem is not new. The study of world history might be the most useful endeavor for today's decision-makers. Such study would free politicians from the ethnocentric and temporal blinkers that so often restrict vision, allowing them to perceive some of the larger facts about international affairs.

The first of these is that the relative strengths of the leading nations have never remained constant, because the uneven rates of growth of different societies and technological and organizational breakthroughs bring greater advantage to one society than to another. For example, the coming of the long-range-gunned sailing ship and the rise of Atlantic trade after 1500 were not uniformly beneficial to the states of Europe—they benefited some much more than others. In the same way, the later development of steam power, and of the coal and metal resources upon which it relied, drastically increased the relative power of certain nations. Once their productive capacity was enhanced, countries would normally find it easier to sustain the burdens of spending heavily on armaments in peacetime, and of maintaining and supplying large armies and fleets in wartime. It sounds crudely mercantilistic to express it this way, but wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth. If, however, too large a proportion of a state's resources is diverted from the creation of wealth and allocated instead to military purposes, that is likely to lead to a weakening of national power over the long term. And if a state overextends itself strategically, by, say, conquering extensive territories or waging costly wars, it runs the risk that the benefits ultimately gained from external expansion may be outweighed by the great expense—a problem that becomes acute if the nation concerned has entered a period of relative economic decline. The history of the rise and fall of the leading countries since the advance of Western Europe in the sixteenth century—that is, of nations such as Spain, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, and, currently, the United States—shows a significant correlation over the long term between productive and revenue-raising capacity on the one hand and military strength on the other.

Of course, both wealth *and* power are always relative. Three hundred years ago the German mercantilistic writer Philip von Hornigk observed that “whether a nation be today mighty and rich or not depends not on the abundance or security of its power or riches, but principally on whether its neighbors possess more or less of it.”

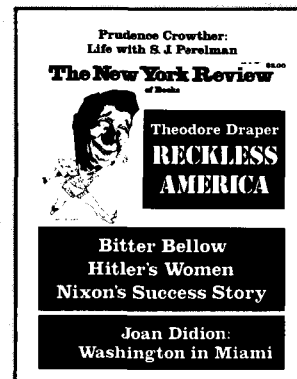
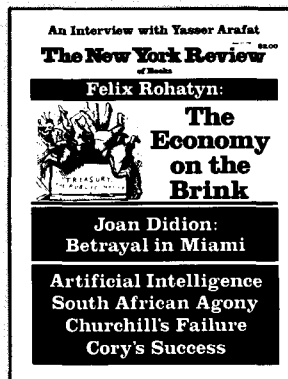
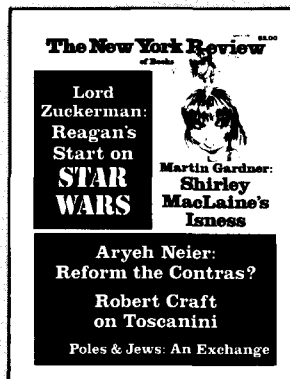
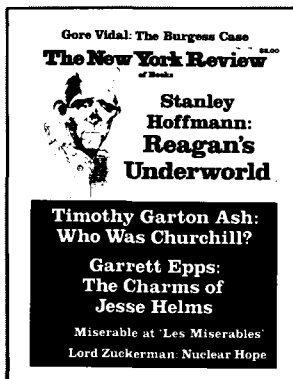
The Netherlands in the mid-eighteenth century was richer in absolute terms than it had been a hundred years earlier, but by that stage it was much less of a Great Power, because neighbors like France and Britain had more power and riches. The France of 1914 was, absolutely, more powerful than the one of 1850—but that was little consolation

when France was being eclipsed by a much stronger Germany. Britain has far greater wealth today than it had in its mid-Victorian prime, and its armed forces possess far more powerful weapons, but its share of world product has shrunk from about 25 percent to about three percent. If a nation has “more of it” than its contemporaries, things are fine; if not, there are problems.

This does not mean, however, that a nation's relative economic and military power will rise and fall in parallel. Most of the historical examples suggest that the trajectory of a state's military-territorial influence lags noticeably behind the trajectory of its relative economic strength. The reason for this is not difficult to grasp. An economically expanding power—Britain in the 1860s, the United States in the 1890s, Japan today—may well choose to become rich rather than to spend heavily on armaments. A half century later priorities may well have altered. The earlier economic expansion has brought with it overseas obligations: dependence on foreign markets and raw materials, military alliances, perhaps bases and colonies. Other, rival powers are now expanding economically at a faster rate, and wish in their turn to extend their influence abroad. The world has become a more competitive place, and the country's market shares are being eroded. Pessimistic observers talk of decline; patriotic statesmen call for “renewal.”

In these more troubled circumstances the Great Power is likely to spend much more on defense than it did two generations earlier and yet still find the world to be less secure—simply because other powers have grown faster, and are becoming stronger. Imperial Spain spent much more money on its army in the troubled 1630s and 1640s than it had in the 1580s, when the Castilian economy was healthier. Britain's defense expenditures were far greater in 1910 than they were, say, at the time of Palmerston's death, in 1865, when the British economy was at its relative peak; but did any Britons at the later date feel more secure? The same problem appears to confront both the United States and the Soviet Union today. Great Powers in relative decline instinctively respond by spending more on security, thereby diverting potential resources from investment and compounding their long-term dilemma.

After the Second World War the position of the United States and the USSR as powers in a class by themselves appeared to be reinforced by the advent of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. The strategic and diplomatic landscape was now entirely different from that of 1900, let alone 1800. And yet the process of rise and fall among Great Powers had not ceased. Militarily, the United States and the USSR stayed in the forefront as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, because they both interpret international problems in bipolar, and often Manichean, terms, their rivalry has driven them into an ever-escalating arms race that no other powers feel capable of joining. Over the same few decades, however, the global productive balances have been changing faster than ever before. The Third World's share of total manufacturing output and GNP, which was depressed to an all-time



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low in the decade after 1945, has steadily expanded. Europe has recovered from its wartime batterings and, in the form of the EEC, become the world's largest trading unit. The People's Republic of China is leaping forward at an impressive rate. Japan's postwar economic growth has been so phenomenal that, according to some measures, Japan recently overtook the Soviet Union in total GNP. Meanwhile, growth rates in both the United States and the USSR have become more sluggish, and those countries' shares of global production and wealth have shrunk dramatically since the 1960s.

IT IS WORTH BEARING THE SOVIET UNION'S DIFFICULTIES in mind when one analyzes the present and future circumstances of the United States, because of two important distinctions. The first is that while it can be argued that the U.S. share of world power has been declining faster than the Soviet share over the past few decades, the problems of the United States are probably nowhere near as great as those of the Soviet Union. Moreover, America's absolute strength (especially in industrial and technological fields) is still much greater than that of the USSR. The second is that the very unstructured, *laissez-faire* nature of American society (while not without its weaknesses) probably gives the United States a better chance of readjusting to changing circumstances than a rigid and *dirigiste* power has. But its potential in turn depends upon a national leadership that can understand the larger processes at work in the world today and perceives both the strong and the weak points of the country's position as the United States seeks to adjust to the changing global environment.

Although the United States is at present still pre-eminent economically and perhaps even militarily, it cannot avoid the two great tests that challenge the longevity of every major power that occupies the number-one position in world affairs. First, in the military-strategic realm, can it preserve a reasonable balance between the nation's perceived defense commitments and the means it possesses to maintain those commitments? And second, as an intimately related question, can it preserve the technological and economic bases of its power from relative erosion in the face of the ever-shifting patterns of global production? This test of American abilities will be the greater because America, like Imperial Spain around 1600 or the British Empire around 1900, bears a heavy burden of strategic commitments, made decades earlier, when the nation's political, economic, and military capacity to influence world affairs seemed so much more assured. The United States now runs the risk, so familiar to historians of the rise and fall of Great Powers, of what might be called "imperial overstretch": that is to say, decision-makers in Washington must face the awkward and enduring fact that the total of the United States's global interests and obligations is nowadays far too large for the country to be able to defend them all simultaneously.

To be sure, it is hardly likely that the United States would be called upon to defend all of its overseas interests simultaneously and unilaterally, unaided by the NATO members in Western Europe, Israel in the Middle East, or Japan, Australia, and possibly China in the Pacific. Nor are all the regional trends unfavorable to the United States with respect to defense. For example, while aggression by the unpredictable North Korean regime is always possible, it would hardly be welcomed by Beijing—furthermore, South Korea has grown to have more than twice the population and four times the GNP of the North. Also, while the expansion of Soviet forces in the Far East is alarming to Washington, it is balanced by the growing threat that China poses to the USSR's land and sea lines of communication in that area. The recent sober admission by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger that "we can never afford to buy the capabilities sufficient to meet all of our commitments with one hundred percent confidence" is surely true; but it is also true that the potential anti-Soviet resources in the world (the United States, Western Europe, Japan, China, Australasia) are far greater than the resources lined up on the USSR's side.

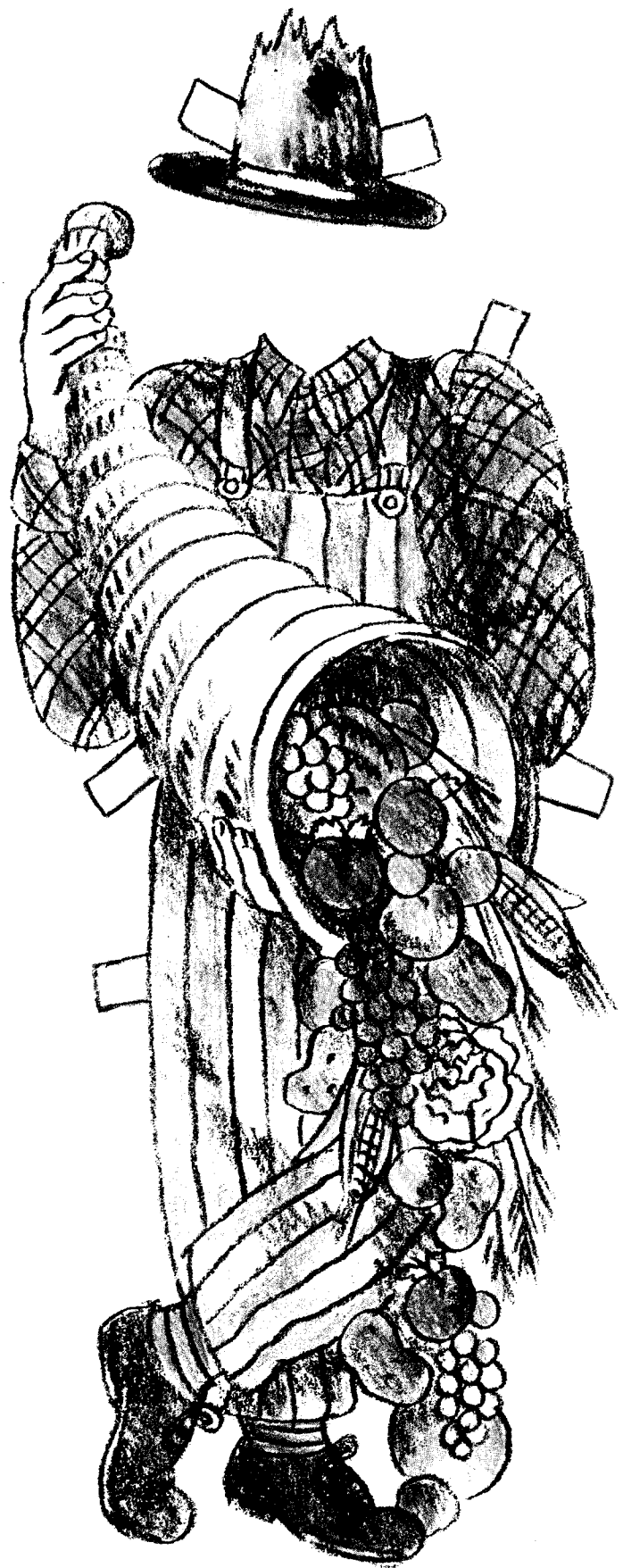
Despite such consolations, the fundamental grand-strategic problem remains: the United States today has roughly the same enormous array of military obligations across the globe that it had a quarter century ago, when its shares of world GNP, manufacturing production, military spending, and armed-forces personnel were much larger than they are now. In 1985, forty years after America's triumph in the Second World War and more than a decade after its pull-out from Vietnam, 526,000 members of the U.S. armed forces were abroad (including 64,000 afloat). That total is substantially more than the overseas deployments in peacetime of the military and naval forces of the British Empire at the height of its power. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and of many civilian experts, it is simply not enough. Despite a near-trebling of the American defense budget since the late 1970s, the numerical size of the armed forces on active duty has increased by just five percent. As the British and the French military found in their time, a nation with extensive overseas obligations will always have a more difficult manpower problem than a state that keeps its armed forces solely for home defense, and a politically liberal and economically *laissez-faire* society sensitive to the unpopularity of conscription will have a greater problem than most.

Managing Relative Decline

ULTIMATELY, THE ONLY ANSWER TO WHETHER THE United States can preserve its position is *no*—for it simply has not been given to any one society to remain permanently ahead of all the others, freezing the patterns of different growth rates, technological advance, and military development that have existed since time immemorial. But historical precedents do not imply that the United States is destined to shrink to the relative obscurity

of former leading powers like Spain and the Netherlands, or to disintegrate like the Roman and Austro-Hungarian empires; it is too large to do the former, and probably too homogeneous to do the latter. Even the British analogy, much favored in the current political-science literature, is not a good one if it ignores the differences in scale. The geographic size, population, and natural resources of Great Britain suggest that it ought to possess roughly three or four percent of the world's wealth and power, all other things being equal. But precisely because all other things are never equal, a peculiar set of historical and technological circumstances permitted Great Britain to possess, say, 25 percent of the world's wealth and power in its prime. Since those favorable circumstances have disappeared, all that it has been doing is returning to its more "natural" size. In the same way, it may be argued, the geographic extent, population, and natural resources of the United States suggest that it ought to possess 16 or 18 percent of the world's wealth and power. But because of historical and technological circumstances favorable to it, that share rose to 40 percent or more by 1945, and what we are witnessing today is the ebbing away from that extraordinarily high figure to a more natural share. That decline is being masked by the country's enormous military capability at present, and also by its success in internationalizing American capitalism and culture. Yet even when it has declined to the position of occupying no more than its natural share of the world's wealth and power, a long time into the future, the United States will still be a very significant power in a multipolar world, simply because of its size.

The task facing American statesmen over the next decades, therefore, is to recognize that broad trends are under way, and that there is a need to manage affairs so that the relative erosion of America's position takes place slowly and smoothly, unaided by policies that bring short-term advantage but long-term disadvantage. Among the realities that statesmen, from the President down, must be alert to are these: that technological and therefore socio-economic change is occurring in the world faster than it has ever before; that the international community is much more politically and culturally diverse than has been assumed, and is defiant of simplistic remedies offered by either Washington or Moscow for its problems; that the economic and productive power balances are no longer tilted as favorably in America's direction as they were in 1945. Even in the military realm there are signs of a certain redistribution of the balances, away from a bipolar and toward a multipolar system, in which American economic and military strength is likely to remain greater than that of any other individual country but will cease to be as disproportionate as it was in the decades immediately after the Second World War. In all the discussions about the erosion of American leadership it needs to be repeated again and again that the decline is relative, not absolute, and is therefore perfectly natural, and that a serious threat to the real interests of the United States can come only from a failure to adjust sensibly to the new world order.





Just how well can the American system adjust to a state of relative decline? Already, a growing awareness of the gap between U.S. obligations and U.S. power has led to questions by gloomier critics about the overall political culture in which Washington decision-makers have to operate. It has been suggested with increasing frequency that a country needing to reformulate its grand strategy in the light of the larger, uncontrollable changes taking place in world affairs may be ill served by an electoral system that seems to paralyze foreign-policy decision-making every two years. Foreign policy may be undercut by the extraordinary pressures applied by lobbyists, political-action committees, and other interest groups, all of whom, by definition, are prejudiced in favor of this or that policy change, and by the simplification of vital but complex international and strategic issues, inherent to mass media whose time and space for such things are limited and whose *raison d'être* is chiefly to make money and only secondarily to inform. It may also be undercut by the still powerful escapist urges in the American social culture, which are perhaps understandable in terms of the nation's frontier past but hinder its coming to terms with today's complex, integrated world and with other cultures and ideologies. Finally, the country may not always be helped by the division of decision-making powers that was deliberately created when it was geographically and strategically isolated from the rest of the world, two centuries ago, and had time to find a consensus on the few issues that actually concerned foreign policy. This division may be less serviceable now that the United States is a global superpower, often called upon to make swift decisions vis-à-vis countries that enjoy far fewer constraints. No one of these obstacles prevents the execution of a coherent, long-term American grand strategy. However, their cumulative effect is to make it difficult to carry out policy changes that seem to hurt special interests and occur in an election year. It may therefore be here, in the cultural and political realms, that the evolution of an overall American policy to meet the twenty-first century will be subjected to the greatest test.

Nevertheless, given the considerable array of strengths still possessed by the United States, it ought not in theory to be beyond the talents of successive Administrations to orchestrate this readjustment so as, in Walter Lippmann's classic phrase, to bring "into balance . . . the nation's commitments and the nation's power." Although there is no single state obviously preparing to take over America's global burdens, in the way that the United States assumed Britain's role in the 1940s, the country has fewer problems than had Imperial Spain, besieged by enemies on all fronts, or the Netherlands, squeezed between France and England, or the British Empire, facing numerous challengers. The tests before the United States as it heads toward the twenty-first century are certainly daunting, perhaps especially in the economic sphere; but the nation's resources remain considerable, *if* they can be properly utilized and *if* there is a judicious recognition of both the limitations and the opportunities of American power. □

The preceding article argued that there is an ominous imbalance between America's real economic power and its military obligations. This article makes the case for reducing one of those obligations—the deployment of our troops in Europe

IKE WAS RIGHT

BY JAMES CHACE

NOT LONG AFTER HE LEFT THE PRESIDENCY, Dwight D. Eisenhower declared, "For eight years in the White House I believed and have announced to my associates that a reduction of American strength in Europe should be initiated as soon as European economies were restored. . . . I believe the time has now come [for] withdrawing some of those troops." More than three decades later the troops—some 350,000 of them—are still there. But now NATO Europe, including France and Spain, is the second most powerful economic grouping in the world—at a time when America strains under the twin burdens of huge fiscal and trade deficits. NATO Europe's population—373 million—is greater than that of the United States or the Soviet Union. The Europeans have more than 3.1 million men under arms, the United States 2.1 million, the Soviet Union roughly 4 million. (Other members of the Warsaw Pact have 1.2 million, but these forces would be highly unlikely to participate in any attack on the West.) But according to official estimates that originated in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, European defense spending is \$83 billion a year—far less than the \$134 billion the United States allocated for the conventional defense of Europe in the defense budget of \$314 billion requested for fiscal year 1986. (Defense Department figures for total U.S. spending on the defense of Europe are even higher.) To say that we must wait for European unity before we can withdraw any American forces is to beg the question. Elected West German officials at the highest levels have recently made clear to American officials that they are amenable to the withdrawal of U.S. troops by the next American presidential election, or soon thereafter, as long as the withdrawal is gradual.

Our Asian commitments are far less costly. Asia absorbs \$42 billion of the United States defense budget annually. Since 1955, however, Japan has spent only one percent of its gross national product on its own defense (though for fiscal year 1988 the Japanese, with great anguish, decided to increase their spending by four thousandths of a percentage point, to the equivalent of \$22 billion). The U.S. trade deficit with Japan rose to \$51.5 billion in 1986, by far the largest with any single country. And more than three decades after the end of the Korean War we still station about 43,000 soldiers in South Korea, costing \$4.8 billion a year. Our trade deficit with South Korea last year was \$7.1 billion.

Under these conditions it is hardly surprising that responsible leaders in the United States Senate have called for significant cuts in the number of American military personnel stationed abroad. In the early 1970s Mike Mansfield, then the majority leader of the Senate, called for unilateral withdrawal of U.S. troops from Western Europe. In 1984 Senator Sam Nunn, of Georgia, proposed that 90,000 American soldiers be withdrawn from Europe within five years unless the Europeans increase their conventional forces so as to make it easier for Europe to be defended without the early use of nuclear weapons. Nunn's bill was defeated, but by a margin of only 55 to 41.

These proposals represent piecemeal approaches to any meaningful restructuring of the alliance. Moreover, talk of troop withdrawal merely threatens the Europeans and aggravates the resentments inherent in any alliance when the protector threatens to withdraw its protection. Too often the United States makes such threats for reasons that have very little to do with the alliance itself. How often, for example, has Washington insisted that the European allies line up with the United States on affairs outside the NATO region, such as the defense of the Persian Gulf or an economic boycott of Iran? Then, when the allies refuse to do so, critics in America call for withdrawing troops as a kind of punishment. In fact the alliance was formed solely to guard against a Soviet invasion of Western Europe or the Eastern Mediterranean. It has no other purpose.

Every time the question of reducing the U.S. troop commitment in Europe is raised, so is the specter of a neutralist Europe, dominated by the Soviet Union. This specter—the so-called Finlandization of Europe—is imaginary. The European states are rich and powerful. They have large and efficient armies; the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies has concluded that the Warsaw Pact would not necessarily see "its numerical advantages as being sufficient to risk an attack." In an address at Columbia University this spring the former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt said of Russian conventional superiority that it "doesn't really matter." Schmidt pointed out that "there are 500,000 [West German] soldiers on the spot, and this number can grow quickly to 1.3 million in less than a week." And a small though effective nuclear strike force already exists in France and Britain.

To surrender sovereignty is a self-destructive act that no

European state is likely to commit. As it is, Europe is already independent in its support of American policy initiatives from Afghanistan to Central America. Where European and American interests coincide—along the Iron Curtain—the Europeans have every intention of lining up with their American allies to counter any Soviet military thrust westward. Furthermore, American strategic nuclear weapons can remain in the European theater on submarines and on aircraft, even if medium-range *and* short-range missiles—the so-called zero-zero option—are withdrawn from European soil as a result of a Reagan-Gorbachev arms agreement. Gorbachev has even proposed to “rectify” conventional force imbalances “not through a buildup by the one who lags behind but through reduction by the one who turns out to be ahead.”

Distrustful Europeans often ask, Will the American nuclear guarantee hold? In other words, Will America risk the destruction of Wichita for Hamburg? It is, of course, an unanswerable question, short of nuclear war. Yet the very uncertainty of the answer makes the American deterrent credible. As the British strategist Sir Michael Howard notes: “If there is one chance in a hundred of nuclear weapons being used, the odds would be sufficient to deter an aggressor even if they were not enough to reassure an ally.”

The greatest danger to America’s alliances today does not spring from any diminished American nuclear capability, whatever the outcome of a Reagan-Gorbachev summit. Rather, it comes from American economic weakness, from an unwillingness to take measures to repair our economy, and from an unwillingness to change the structure of alliances in a way that would honestly reflect a mature America’s diminished role in the world.

GRANDMOTHER’S SPIT

To wipe the sleep-grains from my eyes or rub
a food smudge from my cheek, Grandmother’d lick
her rough right thumb and order me, *Come here.*
Come here, boy. Now. I’d sidle into reach.
She’d clutch my arm and hold me near her face,
while, with that spit-damp thumb, she scrubbed the spot.
I struggled like a kitten being licked,
then leaned into the touch, again cat-like,
helping that fierce thumb scour loose the dirt.
It smelled, her spit, of lipstick and tobacco—
breath-warm, enveloping. She’d hold me at arm’s length,
peer hard into my face, and state, *You’re clean.*
When she let go, I’d crouch behind the door
and, with my own spit, rub the clean spot raw.

—Andrew Hudgins

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY TO THE EUROPEANS FOR managing the bulk of their ground defenses could save substantial sums in the U.S. budget. David Calleo, of The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, suggests that by demobilizing six of its ten NATO divisions, about 100,000 soldiers, the United States would realize an annual saving of at least \$30 billion. Four U.S. divisions would remain in Europe to cover the part of the Central Front for which the United States has direct responsibility.

If the Europeans were to assume a much larger share of the burden of defense, it would be sensible to let them be in charge. This would mean appointing a European, rather than an American, Supreme Commander of all forces in Western Europe.

The new alliance structure would be immeasurably strengthened by a new European defense system along the lines of the European defense community proposed in the early 1950s. Helmut Schmidt and the former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing have already suggested integrating French, West German, and Benelux forces. But any such West European defense system, as Mr. Schmidt pointed out in his speech at Columbia, is likelier to come about if the United States starts to withdraw its forces.

A new European defense system should logically include new provisions for nuclear defense. At this time the United States still maintains a special relationship with Great Britain, allowing Britain to share American nuclear secrets and use its nuclear technology. Such a relationship inhibits any serious cooperation between Britain and France in the construction of a nuclear force. Nonetheless, according to *The New York Times*, the two European nuclear powers have recently started talking seriously about coordinating their defense and consulting more closely on it. David Owen, the former British Defense Minister and the leader of the Social Democrats, has argued that Britain must break its dependence on American nuclear weaponry, as the French have done already. Ending the special nuclear relationship between the United States and Great Britain, however, would not guarantee an Anglo-French nuclear force. And the West Germans will rightly insist on some say in any such force if it is to complement the American nuclear deterrent. But with a European commander of NATO and a reduction of U.S. troops, the likelihood of Owen’s proposals being implemented would be far greater than it is at present. In any case, this would have to be a European initiative, and would not so much replace the American deterrent as provide the Europeans with insurance if they distrust the American commitment to use nuclear weapons to defend the continent.

In the Far East the costs of alliance are necessarily smaller, and in any case it is highly inadvisable in the near term for the United States to withdraw any of the U.S. soldiers in South Korea. The internal struggle for democracy there would almost certainly be adversely affected if U.S. troops departed, leaving the army of a repressive government as

the sole military force left in South Korea. Nonetheless, Washington might make clear to the Tokyo government the need for Japan to pay more of the cost of maintaining these troops in place, before Congress insists on some measure of reduction. Tokyo would surely prefer to help underwrite some of the costs of the U.S. troops now stationed on the Asian peninsula, rather than to risk withdrawal of American forces.

The role the United States plays in maintaining the balance of power in the Far East may well become more important as China gains in economic and military strength. With the revival of Chinese power America's security treaty with Japan is more significant than ever before. Japan should not be encouraged to become a nuclear power, for Japan is not anchored within a regional organization the way West Germany, Britain, and France are. Should Japan reassert itself as a military power—even without nuclear weapons—it is likely that China and the Soviet Union would draw together to counter Japanese power. Only the United States has the capability to restrain Japan in a way that both China and the USSR—to say nothing of the smaller Asian powers and Japan itself—can accept. With the rise of China and Japan and the continuing strong mili-

tary presence of the USSR, the United States has become the determining force for peace in the region.

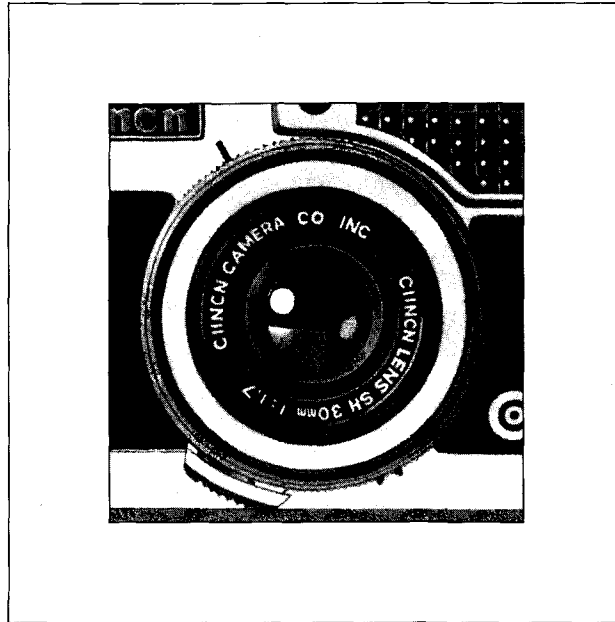
The costs of an effective foreign policy are real. Although we have come to the end of an era wholly dominated by two superpowers, this need not mean the curtailment of U.S. power. It does, however, require a realignment of power. Unless we move both to replenish our hollow economy and to restructure our antiquated alliances, we risk presiding over the collapse of a world order that has, after all, preserved a rough balance of power for almost half a century.

Should American budgetary, tax, and defense policy remain roughly unchanged, a recession could lead to a shortfall in tax revenues and the growth of the federal deficit to a figure far greater than the current \$221 billion. This scenario is very likely to begin with a dramatic fall in the stock market. Such a catastrophe would undermine the economic foundations of the Western world, and with them the very notion of political and military security. By showing a willingness now to redress our economic profligacy at home while changing the terms of our alliances abroad, America can yet restore its power and purpose. □



DISASSEMBLY

An Anthology



ACUITY

Your camera, a perfectionist,
picked through images, snapped up the best,
and left you printing blurred sunsets
for a living, your vision bright with tears
from fixer fumes.

You told me about Wyoming,
small towns and suicides
and the wolves that sounded sad to you,
not frightening, when they closed their yellow eyes
and howled. They mate
for life, you said.

You showed me pictures of ice.

You explained how things work
better than I can remember—
cameras and trucks and molecules
and trees; cats,
the reflective membrane
behind their retinas
passing light through the nerve net
for a second time.

Once, in tame New Hampshire,
we slept in the back of your pickup,
the dog curled between us.
You don't have a picture
of the men with guns who woke us.
Which way did the bear go? they asked
and you laughed,
conjured up its dim eyes, wet nose
sniffing us as we slept.

We admired your fisheye lens. It made things
too close to see, the way
our lives were for the time
they followed each other around.

—Pamela Alexander

UNBUILDING

Stepping around bales
of fencing wire and a clutter
of machine parts on my way
to class

I stopped to watch two men
on top of the building next to mine
tossing rectangles
of old or damaged asphalt

sheets off the roof and
into the bed
of a red pickup parked
four floors below on the grass.

I stopped
out of habit, to give
odds on a miss—one out of ten
seemed right—but these two

never missed. They had
a rhythm going. Their bandannas,
fastened over nose
and mouth, dipped

and swung up as their arms did,
the whole torso
curving then straightening
over their braced legs,

and one gold earring,
the taller man's, flashing out
as if it were itself charged
with movement

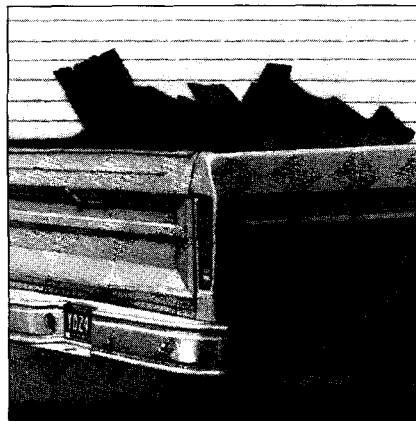
and music. There might have been
music—a Walkman, perhaps—but I
couldn't hear it.

There must certainly have been
carcinogens and bitumen scruff
floating up from the tiles,
but I couldn't see it.
From the ground, it was purely

beautiful. Two men
in silhouette against a noon-
blazed blue, lifting and releasing
like blue-work-

shirted angels
clearing the sky of decades of
dust, so the day's
work might begin again.

—Lynne McMahon



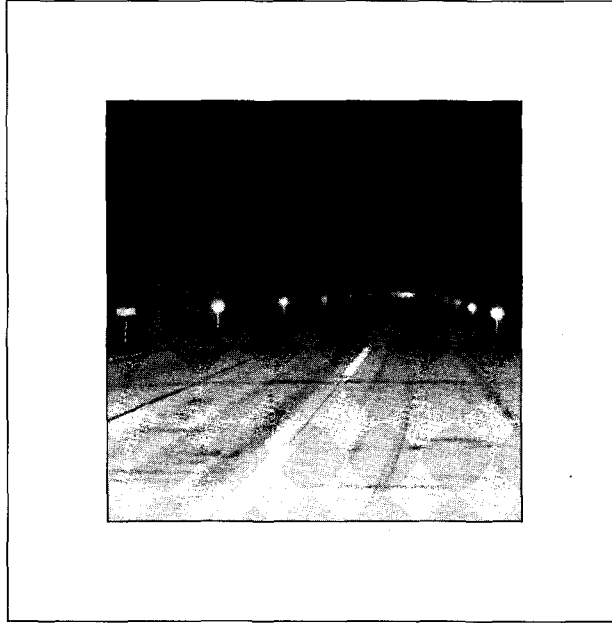
ONE OF THE CITIZENS

What we have here is a mechanic who reads Nietzsche, who talks of the English and the French Romantics as he grinds the pistons; who takes apart the Christians as he plunges the tarred sprockets and gummy bolts into the mineral spirits that have numbed his fingers; an existentialist who dropped out of school to enlist, who lied and said he was eighteen, who gorged himself all afternoon with cheese and bologna to make the weight, and guarded a Korean hill before he roofed houses, first in East Texas, then here in North Alabama. Now his work is logic and the sure memory of disassembly. As he dismantles the engine, he will point out damage and use, the bent nuts, the worn shims of uneasy agreement. He will show you the scar behind each ear where they put in the plates. He will tap his head like a kettle where the shrapnel hit, and now history leaks from him, the slow guile of diplomacy and the gold war makes, betrayal at Yalta and the barbed wall circling Berlin. As he sharpens the blades, he will whisper of Ruby and Ray. As he adjusts the carburetors, he will tell you of finer carburetors, invented in Omaha, killed by Detroit, of deals that fall like dice in the world's casinos, and of the commission in New York that runs everything. Despiser of miracles, of engineers, he is as drawn by conspiracies as his wife by the gossip of princesses

and he longs for the definitive payola of the ultimate fix. He will not mention the fiddle, though he played it once in a room where farmers spun and curses were flung, or the shelter he gouged in the clay under the kitchen. He is the one who married early, who marshaled a crew of cranky half-criminal boys through the incompletions, digging ditches, setting forms for culverts and spillways for miles along the right-of-way of the interstate; who moved from construction to Goodyear Rubber when the roads were finished; who quit each job because he could not bear the bosses after he had read Kafka; who, in his mid-forties, gave up on Sartre and Camus and set up shop in this Quonset hut behind the welder, repairing what comes to him, rebuilding the small engines of lawnmowers and outboards. And what he likes best is to break it all down, to spread it out around him like a picnic, and to find, not just what's wrong, but what's wrong and interesting—some absurd vanity, or work, that is its own meaning—so when it's together again and he's fired it with an easy pull of the cord, he will almost hear himself speaking, as the steel clicks in the single cylinder, in a language almost like German, clean and merciless, beyond good and evil.

—Rodney Jones





BREAKDOWN

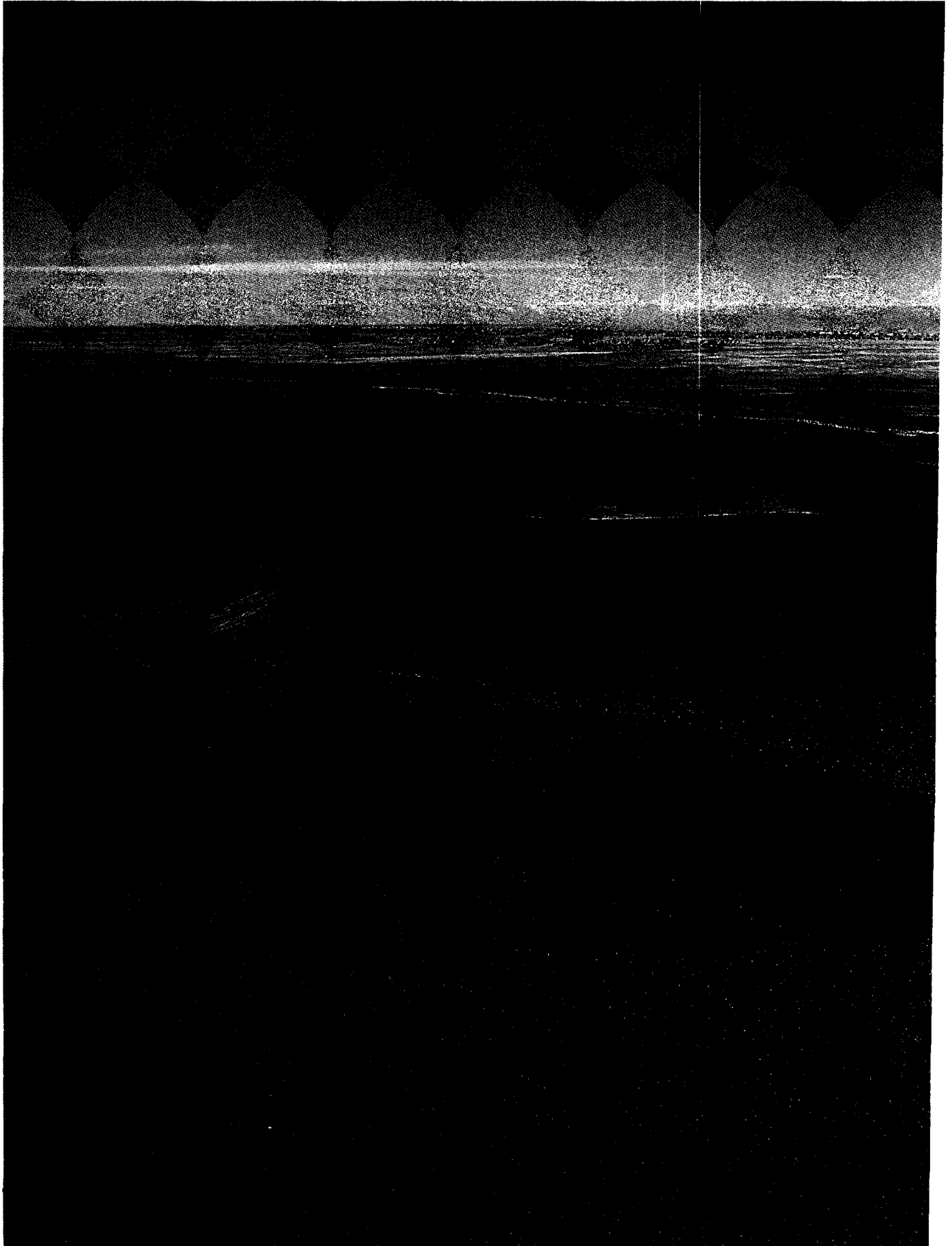
When finally you know
you are not going to make it,
the car's heart failing
on this dark country road,
the night, which had so politely
stepped aside, crowding in on you
like a stranger in a bar
who wants more than you're
prepared to give him, or
the intruder you're sure
has entered your foyer at midnight
with his crowbar for your spine,

do you stop
at the broken-down farmhouse
looming like some monster of retribution,
old eggs and sweat in its breath,
swollen with children and hostility,
the smell pressing its great thumb
on your nostrils and eyelids,
the old man in his bloated undershirt
looking everywhere but at you,
his thick fist wriggling
in his greasy overalls, his wife
clutching her disgust tight
to her breast, the telephone hung
on the exposed lath, dead?

Or do you shake hands with that stranger,
let him buy you a drink, show him
your wallet and silver,
inhale his pomaded hair,
and cruise back to his place
with its abandoned gas stations,
its policemen winking under streetlamps,
its pleasant houses where you know
it's too late to go?

Or will it matter when tomorrow,
that mechanic who's always shown up
so reliably before, comes back
with his bright lamp, his tools
and his expertise, and you drive home
to your own country, nothing changed,
except for this small uncertainty,
this fist in your gut, this sneer
twisting your lips, as if
you knew something true and awful,
something you could never, never confess?

—Ronald Wallace



The artist James Turrell is shaping Arizona earth so that an observer can listen to the sounds of the stars, be enveloped by the image of the moon, and think he is watching a seventy-five-story volcanic crater flatten into the desert floor

RODEN'S EYE

BY FRED HAPGOOD

MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO A VENT TORE OPEN FIFTY miles beneath what is now central Arizona. Through this lesion the pressures of the deep interior took slow aim at the roof of that world, the floor of our own, and commenced a bombardment of molten rock that is continuing still. Over time this barrage, the remains of which are known as the San Francisco Volcanic Field, walked north and east, just nicking the edge of the Painted Desert, near what are now Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico. Right at the point where field and sands touch, a small, exceptionally well formed cinder cone can be seen, standing off from the other volcanoes, deeper into the desert. From a certain angle the cone has the shape of a bow wave, as though something alive were running under the sand, out toward the midst of the coral and orange landscape. This is Roden Crater.

In the past few years a swelling stream of curators, astronomers and other scientists, artists, journalists, and collectors have been flying into Flagstaff to visit a construction project nearby. The exact nature of the project is not simple to pin down, though certainly most visitors would agree that what is proceeding is the construction of a piece of contemporary art—a combination of earthwork, sculpture, and architecture, perhaps, and almost certainly the largest piece of serious art under way in the world today. *The Los Angeles Times* called it "an astonishing project of staggering magnitude." An article in *The Wall Street Journal* said that in Roden Crater "the sun and the moon and the stars will be given the stage upon which they [will] have the opportunity to present themselves as they will, like dancers in the sky." John Russell, of *The New York Times*, predicted that the crater will "mediate on our behalf between geological time and celestial time." Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, a widely respected collector of contemporary art, has called Roden "the Sistine Chapel of America." A journalist dropped by investigating rumors that the Defense Department had plans for the site.

AUGUST 1987

DICK WISER

Part of this confusion stems from the reluctance of the man behind the project, the artist James Turrell, to present the enterprise in any definitive way. The prospectus for the project, for instance, is nothing more than a list of the chambers he plans to build along the walls or under the floor of the crater. One of these is a thousand-foot tunnel constructed such that once every 18.61 years, weather permitting, the image of the moon will fill its entire opening for a few moments and appear on the rear wall. There are chambers sited to "capture" certain rare kinds of light that appear in the skies over the desert. But the prospectus itself is an endlessly mutable document, with statements of purpose and specific plans included according to which organization is being asked to contribute a portion of the \$5 million that needs to be raised.

Turrell has the bones of a bird, delicate features and hands, a light step, a red and gray beard, and eyes at once brown and green. When collared directly, he seems willing enough to explain his intentions, but somehow, mysteriously, his language seems always to fall just short of communicating anything definite. At one point he said to me that he was building "pre-built primitive art" and "one of the major ruins of the future," at another that he was searching for a way "to make manifest what the space inside the crater is seeing." (He also has been quoted as saying that the finished crater will be a musical instrument upon which celestial bodies will beat out, in light, the rhythms of the spheres.) Turrell's body language was subtle: he kept his face straight and his speech dry and his hands by his sides. But the hint that he was prepared to keep this up for as long as I liked was unmistakable.

As opaque as the Roden project may be, Turrell has already raised nearly a million dollars and persuaded a foundation to buy him Roden, and he can call on the energies of dozens of volunteers, some of whom fly in from considerable distances just to help wrestle water pipe. Clearly, there is something here that touches the heart. When I visited, Turrell was in the midst of reshaping the original saddle shape of the crater's bowl into an elliptical concavity whose rim measures nearly a thousand feet by nine hundred feet across and that is a hundred and forty feet deep. Because tumbleweed roots in disturbed soil, the construction had created an ideal seed bed for it, and hundreds of dry spiral twists had found in the big dish an end to their long voyaging.

The view from the lip was remarkable. The summer rains had just fallen, brushing tints of green and flax over the rust and black and tan of the sands outside the cone. Off into the desert, which lay open to view for more than a hundred miles, the land shifted between pinks and oranges as intense as those of cheap cosmetics. None of these hues was stable: as clouds passed and the sun wheeled overhead, the colors of the landscape transformed in measured and deliberate steps, as though a composition were being played. The horizon was punctuated by cinder cones and volcanic buttes, which looked like the cooling towers of thermal power plants. Some rose from the direc-

tion of Colorado, some from Utah. Other than Turrell and two visitors from the staff of the Phoenix Art Museum, who sat, legs drawn up, on the opposite rim, there was hardly a sign of the human race. The volumes reaching behind them were so immense that they looked like giants, men carved out of mountains.

Behind and all around the three, dozens of slanted, ribbon-like shadows cast by clouds sailed at different speeds and in different directions. There was a sense of standing on the floor of an ocean saturated with light. In between the desert and the surface of this ocean, miles overhead, lived the gliding shafts of cloud shadow, the sheets of air, each marked with a distinct species of cloud, crossing each other at different altitudes, and the patterns of radiance shifting as the sun, curving west, picked out and illuminated the texture of the atmosphere, as if with pedagogical intent. A smooth, gustless cool dry wind, the motor of the tumbleweeds, streamed up the sides of the volcano and poured into the sky.

After several minutes Roden, which is seventy-five stories above the desert floor, seemed to flatten right out onto the desert floor. All that was left was an acre of tumbleweed, lying flat as a stain. The great weight of the space above appeared to press the crater down into the desert like a preserved leaf. Later I mentioned this illusion to Turrell. "Right," he said, as though I had answered a question.

THE REASONS THAT VISITORS ARRIVE, CONTRIBUTE, and go home lit with enthusiasm probably lie less in the view than in the reputation of the artist behind the project. Though only in his mid-forties, James Turrell is by any standard a major American artist. He has had retrospectives at the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Los Angeles, and he has shown at the Leo Castelli Gallery, in New York, one of the more prestigious private galleries in the world. He holds a MacArthur fellowship.

These triumphs have rested on his mastery not of oil or watercolor but of a medium known as the "homogeneous field," a visual experience that is to the eye what white noise is to the ear—a perfectly featureless sensorium. The reader might experience one of these fields by cutting a hole in a large piece of paper, taking it outside, and holding it in front of a region of the sky that is cloudless, not uncomfortably bright, and above the building line. The area within the hole is a homogeneous field. (The sky is usually too bright to allow prolonged investigation of homogeneous fields by this means, however.) Perhaps the best known of these "undifferentiated surrounds" are whiteouts—the moments during snowstorms when every line, shade, shape, and form is swallowed by an encompassing whiteness.

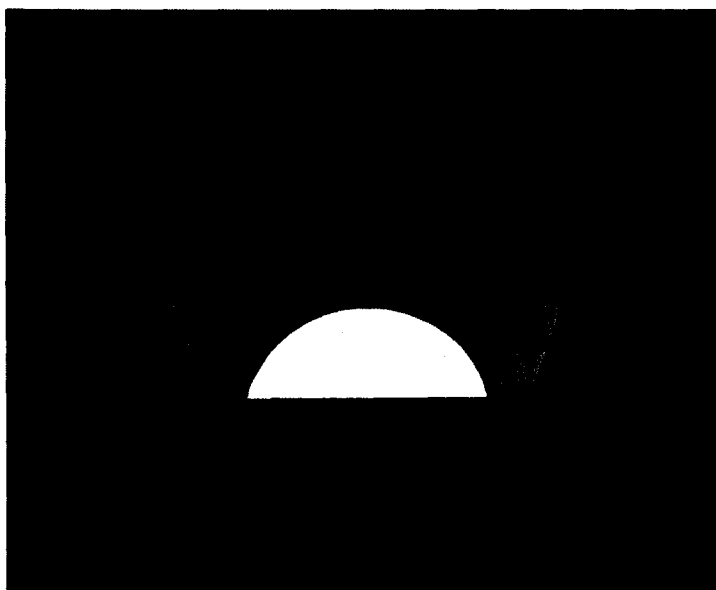
Until Turrell grasped their expressive power, these fields had been curiosities of the psychology lab. They were studied first by gestalt psychologists in the thir-

ties, who surrounded subjects with meticulously whitewashed and neutrally lit boards in the hope that "homogeneous stimulation" of the visual field, or the *Ganzfeld*, would reveal the nature of the primal visual experience. The technique was reborn in the early fifties, when perceptual psychologists developed several new ways of generating the fields. One was to split a Ping-Pong ball, tape the hemispheres over the eyes of the subject, and project lights, which might differ in color between the right and the left, onto the curves of the ball halves.

Both generations of psychologists found the technique difficult to control: their subjects couldn't agree on what it was they were seeing. Apparently, the human retina refuses to believe in homogeneous fields. When exposed to one, it tolerates the phenomenon for a few moments and then begins casting about for other possibilities. Different retinas produce different theories. The most common report was of "swimming in a mist of light which becomes more condensed at an indefinite distance." Most subjects described "sensing something vaguely surface-like in front of the face"; some described a "cone-shaped three-dimensional surface," a "cracked-ice effect," a "web-like structure," or rings of different sizes and shapes. There were reports of memory activation, time distortion, and other hallucinations. Sometimes observers felt that their eyes were in violent motion.

When a homogeneous field was used as the ground against which an object was viewed, contours blurred and shapes transformed. Sometimes the objects seemed to vanish, leaving subjects uncertain as to whether their eyes were even open. After effects included extreme fatigue, great lightness of body, dizziness, and impaired motor coordination, sense of balance, and time perception. Sometimes subjects appeared intoxicated.

Viewer reaction was

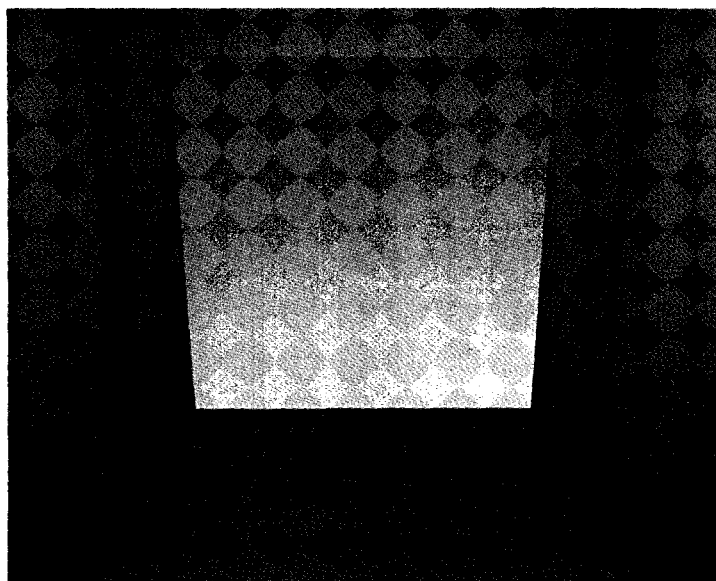


Lunette (1976) by James Turrell: expressive mists of light

that could be marketed, bought, auctioned off, or collected. Performance art and earthworks were part of this critique. A third and less well known part was "perceptual environments," which set out to suggest that the perception of an object was less a function of the object itself than of the establishment-defined environment surrounding that object. This was the wing Turrell drifted into and the context in which he began to explore the special power of the homogeneous field. In particular, in 1968 Turrell, the Los Angeles artist Robert Irwin, and Ed Wortz, a physiological psychologist, entered into a celebrated collaboration to probe the possibilities of the fields.

During the next ten years Turrell discovered how to create these "light mists," as some call them, so that they could be experienced by wandering spectators—people who were not even seated, let alone wearing Ping-Pong balls. He would, for example, paint a chamber with titanium

white, manipulating its dimensions and illumination until someone looking into the enclosure saw the desired effect. He learned how to make his chambers responsive to external events such as the presence and the pace of spectators; how to work with different qualities and intensities of light (he continues to use every kind of source, from argon, quartz halogen, xenon, and tungsten bulbs to fluorescent tubes and simple daylight, moonlight, and starlight); how



Skyspace (1975): homage to the greatest homogeneous field

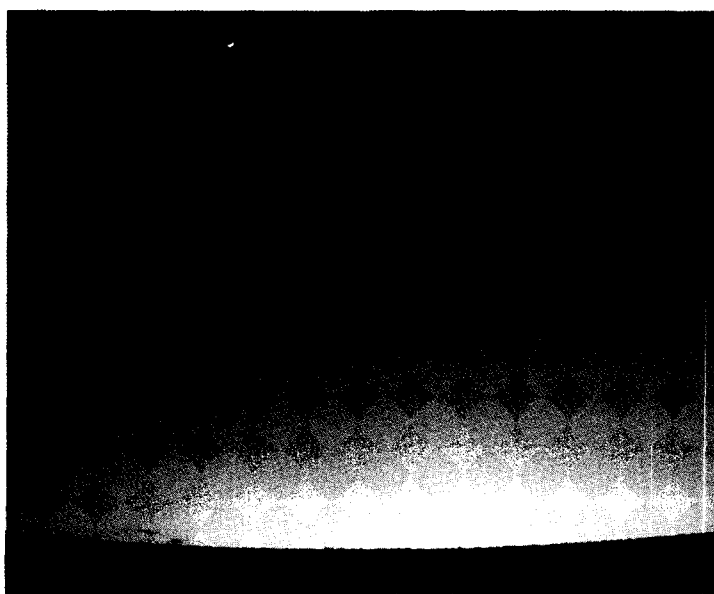
JAMES TURRELL

JAMES TURRELL

to introduce structures, like screens of light, into the fields; how to tint the fields with different hues, and how to make them seem to shimmer, to fill up with smoke, to develop a grain, to present a skin or surface. During this time he exhibited only twice, once in Holland and once in Los Angeles. (Turrell also restores antique airplanes, a lucrative sideline that has made him financially independent of the exhibition, grant, and academic-appointment games.) When his show opened at the Whitney, in 1980, almost no one in the New York art world had any advance word on him.

A visitor to the show saw chambers, most the size of small rooms, filled with light. There was nothing in these spaces but light, usually of a single shade. There was almost no sense of the artist's hand, of a deliberate manipulation. The light in the chambers appeared alternately transparent and opaque. Some viewers experienced an illusion of solidity so pronounced that they tried to lean against the large chamber openings and fell through; three of them suffered such injuries to their bodies and egos that they filed suits against Turrell for maintaining a deliberate and dangerous deception. The critics were ecstatic. They declared the medium sensationally novel and the pieces utter knockouts, combining sensuousness with minimalist elegance. Many found them numinous, mystical, an invitation to meditate on the nature of the void. In particular, the critics embraced the very feature that had made the *Ganzfeld* seem so appropriate as a critique of the art experience—their power to destabilize perception, the delicious way in which they subverted the very idea of looking. Ross Wetzstein, of the *Village Voice*, wrote,

As you watch, your sense of substance constantly shifts—the panel solid, then dematerialized, then solid once more . . . the panel floats in space, toward you, away from you,



The moon at sunset, from inside Roden Crater

tions, and this becomes the 'subject' of the work. The art, it transpires, is not in front of your eyes. It is behind them.

A PERSON THINKING ABOUT HOMOGENEOUS FIELDS would naturally find himself reflecting on the greatest of these: the sky. Turrell, an enthusiastic pilot who spends as much time in the air as he can, had abundant opportunity for this sort of reflection, and in the early seventies found himself focusing on the sky's height. The illusion that the sky is a ceiling, which goes by the pretty name of celestial vaulting, is famously strong in children, and most of us, if asked to set aside what we know about the atmosphere, could come up with an altitude at which the ceiling appears to lie at any one moment. This figure is not stable. The apparent height of the sky is a function of the apparent distance of

shimmering in place. You're hypnotized, confused—what you experience contradicts what you "know," and you begin to realize that James Turrell's work is asking you to question the very nature of materiality.

A "brilliant success," said Robert Hughes, of *Time*.

In contemplating these peaceful and august light chambers, one is confronted . . . with the reflection of one's own mind creating its illusions and orienta-

the horizon: specifically, the closer the horizon, the lower the ceiling. (It seems that our sense of the sky's form stays the same regardless of the altitudes we are at.) Turrell's first thought was of a big bowl in which people could walk up and down the interior walls. As viewers moved down the sides of the bowl, the horizon, defined by the lip, would narrow and the sky would descend. What he found most intriguing about the idea, he says, was its power to demonstrate that people



Beyond the rim: extending the artwork to the horizon

"control the shape of the space in which they move."

For anyone else with these interests, the next step would have been to apply for a grant to build a huge wok on some municipal plaza. Turrell instead made a remarkable decision: only a volcano crater would do. And not just any crater. It should have a rim that was both circular and flat (qualities that would simplify the construction and intensify the experience of celestial vaulting), be 400 or 500 feet above the plain and at least 5,000 feet above sea level (so that the sky's color would have begun to deepen), be away from the light pollution and haze of a city, and be in a setting that would extend the artwork into the surrounding landscapes and skies "so that the piece itself would have no end." After working out the specs, Turrell got in his plane and flew off to inspect, individually, each of the thousands of volcanoes dotting the North American cordillera, the complex of ranges that twists up and down the West. The search took seven months and more than 500 hours of air time, and extended from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. Eventually he worked his way to the San Francisco Volcanic Field and found Roden.

Roden fell short of perfection in only one respect: its dish was not circular but saddle-shaped. Otherwise, it had everything, including the advantage of being privately owned and therefore free of the public-lands bureaucracy, which Turrell thought might prove slow to appreciate his intentions. As it turned

out, he had the same problem with the actual owner, a cattle rancher, who could not be persuaded of the benefit of having an art museum, or something, right in the center of his range. Turrell put him on hold for a bit and approached the Dia Art Foundation, which specialized in supporting large environmental pieces. Dia agreed to buy the crater, pay for reshaping the bowl, and take over responsibility for maintenance and visitor control once the project was finished. Turrell went back to the owner, who once again refused to sell.

Turrell simply kept asking. During these discussions, which went on for three years, he visited the crater often. He slept in it, winter and summer, and noticed how the volcano aligned itself to the dawn and the sunset, to the ecliptic, and to the orbits of the planets, and how the colors of the site, of land and sky, changed with the seasons. One day, when he was wandering around outside the crater, Turrell looked up and noticed that a cap cloud had formed over the top of Roden. He scrambled up the side

of the volcano as fast as he could and plunged into the cloud. It was different from thick seacoast fogs, in which the light level is quite low, he says. At this altitude, nearly 6,000 feet above sea level, sunlight penetrated all through, evenly lighting the suspended droplets. The whole space glowed: a homogeneous field.

In 1977 persistence triumphed, and Roden Crater was sold to the Dia Art Foundation, 1,100 acres for \$64,000. By then Turrell's interests had spread far beyond celestial vaulting, and when it came time to talk construction, he had a whole new set of plans to lay before the foundation. One was for a sort of radiotelescope: his idea was to carve a room within the crater and embed in its walls a wire cage that would shield it from radio waves. A circular depression, eight feet across and four feet deep, would be cut in the floor and filled with water; just above the depression a circle of the same diameter would be cut through the roof and shielding. An arrangement of antennae and crystals, in

effect a diode, would pick up the radio energies passing into the chamber through the hole in the shielding, convert them into acoustic vibrations, and release those vibrations into the water. Thus, on a clear night, someone lying in the bath and looking through the hole in the roof would be able to hear the sounds of the stars in the area he was observing.

Most of the proposed rooms were designed to show colors and color changes associated with the movements of the



Behind James Turrell, his major ruin of the future

sun and moon and with changes in the weather. For instance, at sunset a band of pink and blue, sometimes called the twilight arch, lifts up out of the eastern horizon and leads the night over the sky. In one of the chambers an aperture would be cut to capture the rays of the twilight arch for a minute or two during each sunset; during the capture, this light would be "fogged up" into one of Turrell's trademark light mists. Some chambers would be entered from a ramp that would rise, curving around the cone, from the desert surface, others from a tunnel that would meet the main, moon-sighting tunnel. There would be perhaps half a dozen such chambers, conveying as a whole the effect of observatories or galleries of the light of the empyrean (present plans have increased the number to twelve). Most of these, thanks to the use of the *Ganzfeld* as the display technology, a visitor would be able not only to inspect but to enter and immerse himself in, as Turrell had immersed himself in the cloud.

The Dia Art Foundation expressed interest but never

CON KEYES/LOS ANGELES TIMES

could quite decide to fund the project. In 1981 Turrell, who had been following with increasing alarm the stocks in which the foundation's endowment was invested, offered to take over the entire project. Dia agreed and transferred ownership of Roden to a foundation set up for that purpose, called Skystone, which Turrell financed with grants, including the MacArthur, and private donations. Five years later he had fenced, mapped, and surveyed the land, made the necessary seismic soundings, finished planning most of the details, mastered the delicate art of supplying power to the construction equipment with wind (the winds at the top of Roden eat windmills), laid down the access road, established a base camp (courtesy of the Museum of Northern Arizona), drilled a well, installed the pipelines needed for construction and restoration of the site, and begun shaping the rim into a circle.

TURRELL ASSERTS THAT NO ONE FLYING OVERHEAD will have any sense that construction has taken place. He intends to replant the bowl with the original vegetation, which will come as a shock to the tumbleweeds. The finished project will have none of the clues that identify works of art or art institutions: there will be no labels on the walls, no information booth, no recorded cassette lectures for rent. There will be no gift shop, restaurant, visitors' register, or plastic box for contributions. No postcards will be sold. There will be no security guards, parking lot, landing strip, or escalators. In fact, if Turrell's dream is perfectly realized, there will be no spectators, or hardly any: he thinks the largest number of visitors the project can handle will be around three a day.

Roden will be swept clean of references not only to the artist, art object, and art institution but also, aside from a few concessions to safety, to post-Renaissance Western civilization. There are no lenses at Roden, no track lighting, no loudspeakers. (The "radio room" is one example of the ingenuity with which references to this civilization have been dodged.) Someone left to poke around the project on his own, knowing nothing of the actual history, might guess that it was a temple built thousands of years ago by a sect of Native American sky-worshippers and long since abandoned. As much as possible, only local minerals are being used: desert sand, volcanic obsidian for the resonating bathtub, and shale from the bottom of a nearby Jurassic lagoon for the outside walkways, which will give the construction the look of having been built by a people without trucks. (One chamber escapes from the present era in the other direction: a shaft pointed to the North Star is intended to monitor the precession of the earth's pole from Polaris to Vega, which will become the new North Star in 12,000 years.)

Yet the enterprise could not be more high-tech. For instance, the astronomer collaborating with Turrell on the moon-sighting tunnel, Dick Walker, of the naval observatory at Flagstaff, has been working on the math for three

years. Drilling the tunnel will require a laser-guided "mole."

If Turrell could remove all traces of human association, so that Roden looked as though the earth itself had carved it, I have no doubt he would do so. He plans to lay down his local materials oldest first, as if Roden had been built up by geological forces. Something like this must have been in his mind fifteen years ago, when he decided that his celestial-vaulting piece had to go into a crater or nowhere, at a site where the piece would have no end. This instinct for distancing himself from what he does is constantly apparent. Once, Turrell took me flying over the desert. After we had woven this way and that, he nosed toward a notch in a range of nearby hills. "Hogan down there," he said, pointing with the tip of his beard to a circular Navajo dwelling. Obediently I looked down. Sure enough, a hogan. Not that rare a sight in Arizona, but still . . . I looked up just as he nudged the Heliocourier through the notch and the Grand Canyon exploded around me. I leapt up; the seat belt jerked me back. Turrell stared innocently ahead, as if to say, Who, me? Hey, I just fly this thing.

AS OBLIQUE AS TURRELL CAN BE, AFTER HANGING around for a few days I did begin to get a sense of a metaphysic. He seems to have a vision of a world whose active components are not physical entities, things with weight, but spaces. To most of us, a visual act or event is a two-party affair, linking the observer with the observed. Turrell seems to believe that all the action happens in the space that separates the two. The space makes all the decisions; it controls what the observer gets to see and what the observed gets to show. Sometimes it seems that he sees spaces as conscious life forms; he talks of watching spaces watch themselves. "Roden Crater has knowledge in it, and it does something with that knowledge," he says. "It is an eye, something that is itself perceiving. . . . When you're there, it has visions." But perhaps he was merely conducting certain Rauschenbergian experiments in dialogue; it is possible to catch him peeping slyly at his listeners when they think he is most in earnest.

After the sky had rolled the crater out on that first day of my visit, I turned, half dizzy, away from the ocean floating overhead, walked to the bottom of the bowl, lay down and looked back at the rim. The wind had vanished; the air grew softer and warmer. Flies whined among the tumbleweeds. The walls of the crater had drawn into the sky, and the sky had descended to lie across them. The illusion of being sealed inside was so strong that my brain felt compelled to manufacture the sound, faint but unmistakable, of metal sliding over metal. Not fifteen feet overhead tiny clouds, like white flecks in fingernails, scrolleby. One would have thought that the volcano had just given them birth, and there they were, streaming off toward all corners of the globe, ready to take up the great work that lay ahead. □

Knowing about the wide world of gasoline additives will make more of a difference to your car's well-being than you might suppose, but springing for premium won't

OCTANE AND KNOCK

BY DAVID OWEN

MY LAWNMOWER WOULDN'T START, SO I PUT IT IN my car and drove it over to the Tractor Barn.

"You've got bad gas," the mechanic said.

"Hmmm," I said, attempting to sound as though I had suspected as much all along and, simultaneously, I knew he was pulling my leg.

"They put a lot of alcohol in gas now, even when they say they don't," he continued. "And when the alcohol evaporates, the gas goes bad."

As it turned out, the mechanic wasn't quite right about gasoline. (He also found a more expensive problem with my lawnmower.) But he got me thinking. I had always assumed that gasoline was some sort of elemental material that had certain variable properties, such as regularness and unleadedness, but that it was incapable of exhibiting either goodness or badness in the sense the lawnmower mechanic intended. As it turned out, I wasn't quite right either.

Gasoline is different today from what it was even a couple of years ago, when I also didn't know anything about it. Changes in automotive technology, prompted to a large extent by government regulations concerning fuel economy and engine emissions, have created some unexpected problems for petroleum refiners, car manufacturers, and drivers. Some of these problems affect automotive performance; others have implications for human health and the state of the environment. Most drivers are either misinformed about the problems or ignorant of them altogether.

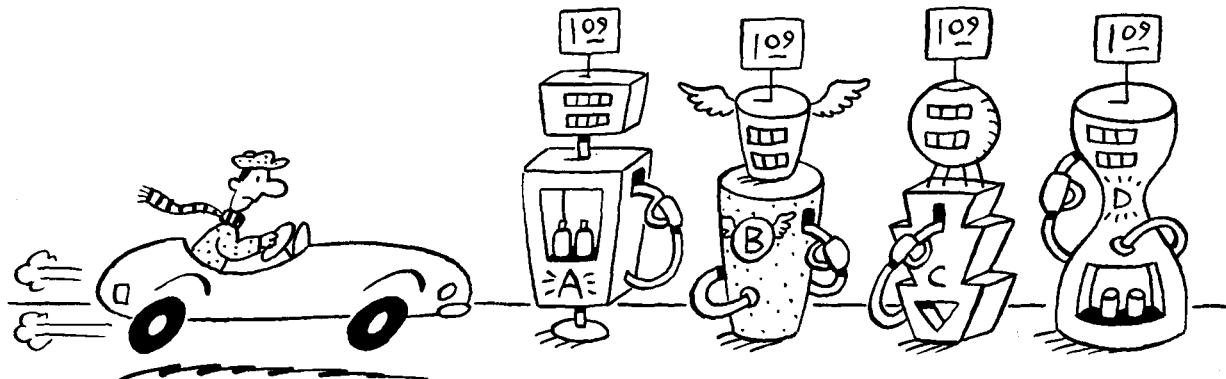
What idiots!

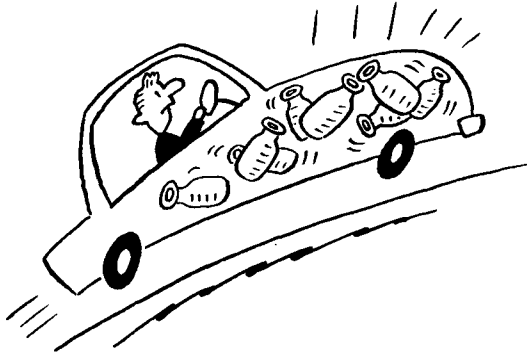
Leaded and Unleaded

LIKE MANY PARENTS, I DREAD THE DAY WHEN MY child is old enough to ask, "Daddy, what makes a car go?" To prepare myself, I recently turned to Scott Corbett's *What Makes a Car Go?*, a fascinating book with large type and well-drawn pictures. Corbett explains that at the heart of the matter are cylinders and pistons. "The cylinders are like six children, sitting at a long table, each waiting his turn to be fed," according to Corbett. The pistons, which are "shaped like tin cans," slide up and down inside these hungry youngsters, propelled by a burning mixture of air and gasoline—their food. "Cylinders and pistons work like popguns," furthermore. Eventually the car pulls up to the fuel pump, toppling a neatly stacked display of oil cans. Fillerup!

Of course, it was all a good bit simpler in Corbett's day. *What Makes a Car Go?* was published in 1963. If you tried to run your nice shiny 1987 Chrysler Le Baron on gasoline from the golden age of driving, you'd have a big, expensive problem on your hands almost before you could sputter over to Corbett's house and shake your fist out the window. In the first place, gasoline usually shouldn't be stored for more than six months or so; that twenty-four-year-old fuel would probably have turned to a gummy muck. In the second place, gasoline in the Corbett era contained additives that can cripple modern engines and emission-control devices.

The best-known of these old-fashioned additives is





lead. Adding lead to gasoline is a cheap way to increase its octane rating. A few pennies' worth (in the form of tetraethyl lead or tetramethyl lead, two compounds of lead, carbon, and hydrogen) can transform a tankful of relatively inexpensive low-octane regular gasoline into a tankful of relatively expensive high-octane premium.

Regular unleaded gasoline usually has an octane rating of 87 or 88, regular leaded measures about 89, and premium unleaded 92 or 93. Most drivers believe that these numbers are measures of a gasoline's "power," comparable to the proof number on a bottle of Scotch. This is not correct. The octane number posted on a gas pump is, rather, a measure of that gasoline's ability to prevent an undesirable engine phenomenon known as knock or ping. This is the rattling-milk-bottles sound you may hear under stressful (for your car) conditions, such as accelerating in a high gear on a steep incline with a broken lawnmower in your back seat. The higher the number on the pump, the greater the gasoline's resistance to knock.

A properly functioning, non-knocking car engine burns fuel in a very orderly way. When a piston moves down inside its cylinder, a mixture of air and vaporized gasoline is drawn into the space above it; when the piston moves back up again, this mixture is compressed. A spark plug, located at the top of the cylinder, emits a flash of electricity that ignites the mixture. As it burns, it expands dramatically, propelling the piston back down in the cylinder. When the piston, on the rebound, moves back up again, a valve at the top of the cylinder opens to let out the exhaust, and then the process begins again. An automobile needs an electric starter to get its pistons moving in the first place, but once the process is under way, it is self-sustaining. The up-and-down motion of the pistons is transferred to the wheels by means of various rods, shafts, and gears, leaving the driver free to look for a parking space.

In a knocking engine, this orderly process goes awry. Heat generated by the compression of the fuel-and-air mixture, or glowing carbon deposits inside the cylinder, can cause parts of the mixture to ignite spontaneously, without any help from the spark plug. This trips up the neatly churning pistons. It also sets off shock waves that produce a knocking sound. If severe enough, these shock waves can damage engine parts. One rare but devastating form of knock can cause an engine to self-destruct in a

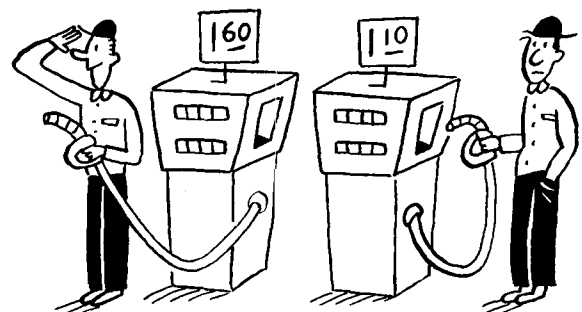
matter of seconds. Called high-speed knock, this malady is little known outside Europe, where people drive just as fast as they want to. Here in America most knock is harmless.

Higher-octane gasoline resists knock by igniting less readily than lower-octane gasoline. Giving a car a higher-octane gasoline than it needs to avoid knock is almost always a waste of money. In fact, a car that never knocks is probably being overindulged. When the price of gasoline fell not long ago, many drivers began treating their cars to premium gasoline. These drivers felt like big spenders, but most of them weren't getting anything for their extravagance except, perhaps, a crisp "Yes, sir!" from the teenager handling the pump.

There is one exception. A growing number of new cars are equipped with devices called knock sensors or knock detectors. These are little gizmos that listen for knock and, if they hear it, get rid of it by firing the spark plug a bit later. Doing this usually diminishes the performance of the engine. Drivers of such cars can sometimes improve both power and fuel efficiency by buying gasoline with a higher octane rating.

Not all octane ratings mean the same thing. My car knocks every once in a while on Texaco Super Unleaded but never on Exxon Supreme, even though both fuels have a posted octane rating of 92. There are several possible reasons for this. First, different cars respond in different ways at different times to different gasolines. Second, the octane number posted on a fuel pump is the average of two other numbers, and the precise composition of the average can make a difference to individual cars. Finally, Exxon is known in the fuel industry for "giving away" octane—that is, for selling gasoline that is slightly higher in octane than the number posted on the pump. The government tests unleaded gasoline to make sure that it measures up to its posted octane ratings, and some gasoline producers protect themselves by tossing in a little extra.

The opposite also happens. Unscrupulous dealers sometimes sell gasoline with an octane rating substantially lower than the number posted. New York City's Department of Consumer Affairs cited 135 gas stations for octane violations in 1986. The major gasoline companies tend to police their stations fairly closely, but the problem is by no means limited to unbranded gasolines. Of the nine New York stations that had three or more violations in 1986,



five sold Texaco gas, one sold Getty gas, and one sold both.

Adding a gram of tetraethyl lead to a gallon of gasoline can, at negligible cost, raise its octane rating by as much as four or five points, or about the difference between regular and premium. Unfortunately, this useful additive is also a hideous poison. Lead can cause anemia and mental retardation, damage or impair nerves, and increase blood pressure. Leaded gasolines contain chemical "scavengers" that prevent excessive buildup of lead in engines by dispelling it, in the form of lead-bromide and lead-chloride gases, in automobile exhaust. These compounds are then breathed in, consumed, and absorbed by almost everyone. Lead's effect on health is cumulative; once it settles in the body, it usually stays there.

In 1973 the Environmental Protection Agency proposed a five-step reduction of lead in gasoline. At the time, an average gallon of regular gasoline contained about two grams of lead, most of which ended up in the atmosphere. The EPA proposed a gradual reduction to half a gram per gallon—averaged over total production of both leaded and unleaded—by the end of 1978. The petroleum industry responded in a predictably hysterical fashion. As a result, the compliance date was held up for nearly two years and small refiners were exempted. A more stringent standard, limiting lead content to half a gram per gallon of leaded gas alone, went into effect in 1985.

On January 1, 1986, the government further reduced the maximum allowable amount of lead in leaded gasoline, to a tenth of a gram per gallon. Actually, most leaded gasoline still exceeds this limit. The EPA has permitted refiners to "bank" the difference between the maximum allowance and the amount they have actually used. A refiner that used less than half a gram per gallon in 1985, for example, earned "lead usage rights" that could be used later or sold to other refiners. A lively market for lead rights arose, with prices greatly exceeding the cost of the lead. The true level of lead in leaded gasoline is often double or triple the stated legal maximum.

This won't go on for long. The industry's lead bank is almost depleted. In addition, the market for leaded gasoline has shrunk. Beginning with the 1975 model year, most new cars were equipped with catalytic converters. These are anti-pollution devices that transform some of the most harmful parts of automobile exhaust into relatively benign substances. One harmful substance they can't transform is lead, which clogs them in short order.

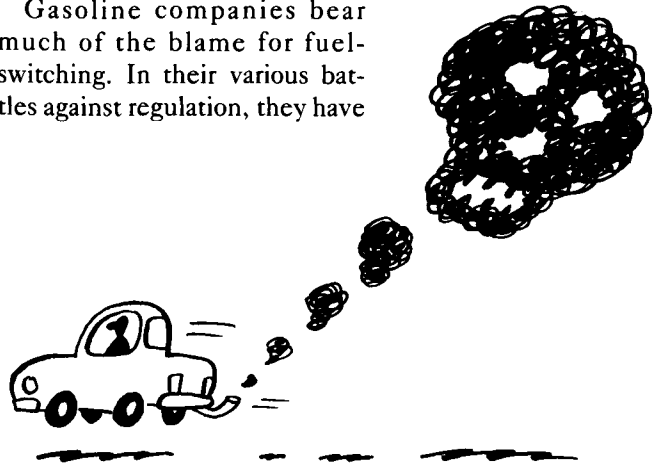
Gasoline producers were as grumpy about catalytic converters as they were about the detoxification of leaded gasoline. Many drivers were grumpy too. Some used plastic adapters to fit leaded-gas nozzles into the smaller fuel openings on their cars. Others removed the converters from their cars and replaced them with non-functioning "test pipes." In 1983 a nationwide survey indicated that 16 percent of cars designed to run on unleaded gasoline were actually being run on leaded.

Most fuel-switching has an economic motive. Leaded

gasoline has sometimes sold for fifty cents a gallon less than unleaded. The gap has closed considerably, but there's still a difference at most gas stations. In my area leaded gasoline usually sells for about nine cents a gallon less than unleaded.

The apparent bargain is misleading, though. A few tankfuls of leaded gasoline can disable a catalytic converter; with continued fuel-switching the disabled converter can diminish engine performance. Even in cars whose converters have been removed, the use of leaded gasoline can increase maintenance expenses. Spark plugs and motor oil need to be changed more frequently. Lead can also cut fuel economy by five to ten percent. In 1985 the EPA estimated that improper fueling cost drivers about nineteen cents a gallon, mostly in increased maintenance. More important from a public perspective, cars with missing or disabled converters spew out vastly greater amounts of pollution than cars whose emissions systems haven't been tampered with.

Gasoline companies bear much of the blame for fuel-switching. In their various battles against regulation, they have

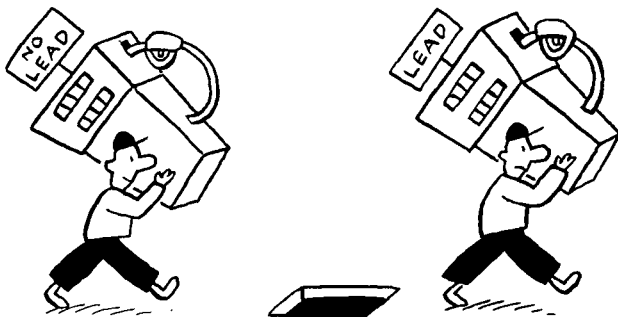


tended to exaggerate the cost of replacing lead as an octane-booster. Lead is indeed cheap, but the alternatives to it are not all as expensive as the industry has sometimes claimed. Furthermore, the industry has maintained an artificial price difference between leaded and unleaded grades as a marketing strategy. Gasoline companies often refer to leaded regular as their "fighting grade," the fuel whose price they post prominently in order to bring customers in off the street. For many gas stations leaded gasoline is actually a loss leader. One station in my town sells 87-octane regular unleaded for \$1.15 a gallon and 89-octane regular leaded for \$1.06. The cost of replacing lead to raise the octane rating in the unleaded regular does not account for this difference. In fact, if you removed the lead from the leaded regular, it would still be higher in octane than the unleaded, and thus presumably more expensive to produce than the regular unleaded. When I asked an oil-company public-relations officer about this paradox, she suggested that I avoid "drawing too much of a relationship between the cost of producing gasoline and the retail price."

The EPA could have greatly reduced fuel-switching from the outset by requiring gas stations to price leaded

gasoline less attractively. Even with all the cheating by misinformed drivers, though, the average level of lead in Americans' blood fell 37 percent between 1976 and 1980, the last year for which national figures are available. These reductions saved the nation hundreds of millions of dollars in medical costs alone, according to the EPA. The benefits have presumably increased in recent years, as more pre-1975 cars have gone out of service and as the oil companies have begun to move away from leaded gasoline altogether. (My local Exxon station now sells three grades of unleaded and no leaded gasoline.)

Do we need leaded gasoline? In pre-1975 cars lead does help prevent an engine problem called valve-seat recession: lead from burned fuel coats exhaust-valve openings and protects them from deterioration. (The valve seats in newer engines are made of tough alloys that don't need lead to protect them.) But valve-seat recession usually occurs only when unprotected engines are run at full throttle over extended periods. Old cars are seldom operated this way. Virtually all of them would work just as well with unleaded fuel as they do with leaded. They could work better, since their maintenance costs would tend to be lower.



Motorboats and farm vehicles, which often *are* operated at full throttle, do gain valve protection from leaded gasoline if their engines are old enough not to be equipped with hardened valve seats. Some of the noisiest lobbying against the EPA's lead standards has come from boat owners. In the words of an article published in *Lakeland Boating* earlier this year, "While the EPA phaseout prevents brain damaged progeny, our enthusiasm is somewhat tempered by the death rattles of last decade's marine engines." Still, the cost of boat owners' maintenance problems comes nowhere near the social cost of lead pollution.

Alcohol and Gasoline

ONE WAY TO INCREASE THE OCTANE RATING OF GASOLINE without using lead is to add alcohol. Ordinary ethanol, or grain alcohol, has an octane rating of around 100. Mixing one part ethanol with nine parts 87-octane unleaded regular boosts the rating by about three points and only slightly reduces the energy content of the fuel. Methanol, or wood alcohol, has a similar effect. Unfortunately, both additives can cause problems.

Several forces made alcohol very attractive as a gasoline additive in the late 1970s and early 1980s. First, the EPA's lead-reduction schedule created a demand for new sources of octane numbers. Second, uncertainties about oil supplies created an interest in renewable fuel sources. (Ethanol is usually manufactured from corn or other agricultural products.) Third, the high price of gasoline, in combination with various state subsidies and a federal tax incentive, made ethanol (which is otherwise relatively expensive) an economically feasible fuel-extender. Gasohol, a fuel much discussed in the late 1970s, consists of 90 percent unleaded gasoline and 10 percent ethanol.

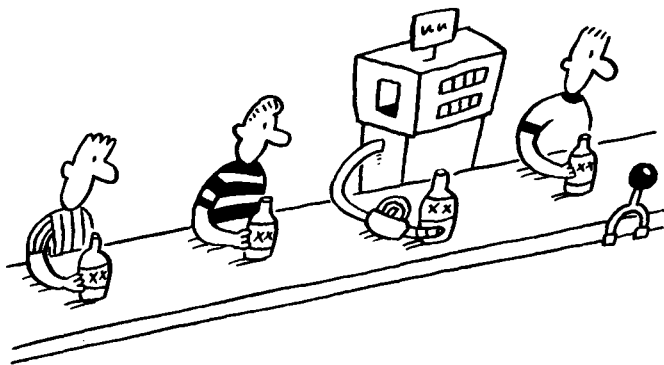
The use of alcohol in unleaded gasoline is regulated by the EPA. In order to prevent the introduction of new fuels that might harm catalytic converters, the government requires fuel manufacturers to get permission from the EPA before selling fuels that are substantially different from those that were available before 1975. (The alcohol content of leaded gasoline is not regulated, since cars that legally use leaded gasoline don't have catalytic converters.) The EPA has thus far approved three alcohol-and-gasoline formulations: one that includes up to 10 percent ethanol and two that include combinations of smaller quantities of methanol and other alcohols known as cosolvents.

Now that gasoline prices have fallen and other octane-enhancing methods have improved, the use of ethanol by the major petroleum refiners is limited. Still, something like 785 million gallons of ethanol were blended into gasoline last year, according to the Renewable Fuels Association, an ethanol lobbying group. Three fourths of this alcohol was used by small, independent refiners who had few other means of boosting octane. Where ethanol is used in this way, it always constitutes 10 percent of the fuel mixture: the EPA doesn't permit using more than 10 percent, and the federal government doesn't give tax breaks for using less. Since unsubsidized ethanol is substantially more expensive than gasoline, there's no incentive for sneaking in more.

Methanol is quite a bit less expensive than ethanol, but at the moment, at least, it's still too costly to be very attractive to fuel producers as a blending ingredient. The federal tax credit for alcohol-blending does not extend to fuels containing alcohol made from petroleum, coal, or natural gas, and most methanol is made from natural gas. Still, some methanol does make its way into gasoline, often as an octane-increaser in leaded gasoline sold at unbranded stations.

There are other reasons, in addition to cost, why alcohol isn't more used in gasoline these days. Alcohol is a solvent for many materials for which gasoline is not. When poured into gasoline storage tanks, it can stir up slumbering substances that one highly trained petrochemical engineer described to me as "gunk."

Alcohol also mixes with water; gasoline does not. When a blend of alcohol and gasoline is contaminated by water (from condensation inside a fuel tank, for example), a highly corrosive water-and-alcohol mixture can separate



from the gasoline and accumulate at the bottom of the tank. Methanol (when unaccompanied by cosolvents) is particularly likely to cause this phenomenon, which is called phase separation. Methanol can also play havoc with plastic engine parts. Chrysler says that its warranties may not cover damage caused by using methanol blends. The owner's manual for my Subaru, I recently discovered, says not to use fuel containing methanol "under any circumstances." (It also says to avoid a steady diet of gasohol.) Some octane-enhancing additives sold at auto-supply stores contain little or nothing but methanol.

("Neat" methanol—that is, methanol all by itself—may be the automotive fuel of the future if car manufacturers are willing to redesign their fuel systems to accommodate it. It produces little pollution, and provides a use for surplus natural gas. A number of refiners, automobile companies, and others are experimenting with it.)

Boat owners are upset about alcohol, too. Alcohol increases gasoline's natural ability to eat through rubber fuel hoses. Leaking fuel is a more serious safety problem in a boat than in a car, since the fuel ends up not on the ground but in the bilges, where explosive vapors can accumulate. According to the Coast Guard, there are about 350 fuel-related fires and explosions on boats each year. What part alcohol plays in these accidents is impossible to estimate, since the evidence generally disappears in the accident.

Determining whether a particular gasoline contains alcohol (and, if so, what kind and how much) can be difficult even under normal circumstances. Forty-three states require alcohol labeling at the fuel pump, but only twenty-one require that both the type and percentage of the alcohol be specified. Most people don't read the fine print on fuel pumps anyway. Inquisitive sorts may wish to try a fun-sounding at-home test that BOAT/U.S. (as the Boat Owners Association of the United States prefers to be called) recommends:

Fill a graduated beaker, or similar measuring container, half full with gasoline. Add an equal amount of water. Shake the container for a minute, then let it sit for several minutes. The water will settle to the bottom and the gasoline will rise to the top. . . . If there is no alcohol in the fuel the container will still show 50 percent gas and 50 percent water. If the gasoline has alcohol in it, the division will not be 50-50.

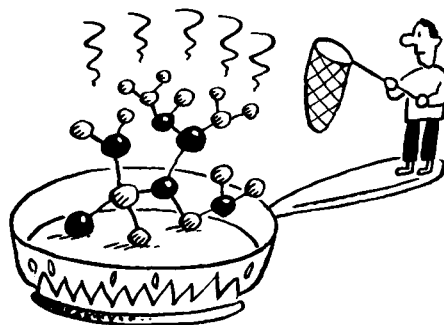
How Crude Oil Gets to Be Gasoline

THE MAJOR REFINERS DON'T NEED ALCOHOL TO INCREASE their octane ratings. They've made up for the loss of lead by refining crude oil more severely, to produce more high-octane components that can be blended into fuel.

Gasoline is not a single substance, like water. It's a blend of various hydrogen-and-carbon compounds, called hydrocarbons. Crude oil is a veritable stew of these compounds, which range in heft and complexity from dainty methane (each molecule of which consists of one carbon atom and four hydrogen atoms) to sluggish penta-octa-contane, or $C_{85}H_{172}$ (85 carbons, 172 hydrogens). In between methane and penta-octa-contane are a large number of compounds with individual properties and interesting names: propane, butane, pentane, heptane, decane, cyclohexane, benzene, toluene, and many others. Comparatively few of the hydrocarbons in crude oil end up in gasoline. Others go on to become kerosene, diesel fuel, heating oil, lubricants, solvents, plasticizers, polishes, waxes, graphite, asphalt, and many other products, including the fuel used to run oil refineries.

Separating these compounds out of crude oil is first a matter of distillation. Each compound has its own boiling point, the temperature at which it ceases to be a liquid and turns into a gas. Methane, for example, vaporizes at about -259° Fahrenheit (unless it's kept under pressure or dissolved in something else, as it is in crude oil); hexadecane vaporizes at about 550° . When petroleum is heated, the components with the lowest boiling points—referred to in the distillation industry as the "light ends"—vaporize first. The less volatile compounds follow. As the resulting cloud of vapor gradually cools, the different compounds reliquefy one at a time and can be drawn off separately. At oil refineries this initial cooling and separating is done in tall towers called pipe stills. In a pipe still, reliquefying hydrocarbons are drawn off in groups. The group containing hydrocarbons with boiling points between about 90° and about 220° is called straight-run gasoline.

Straight-run gasoline has an octane rating of just 63 or so. Your car wouldn't like it. To boost that number and enhance certain properties of gasoline, refiners blend in many additional components extracted from petroleum.

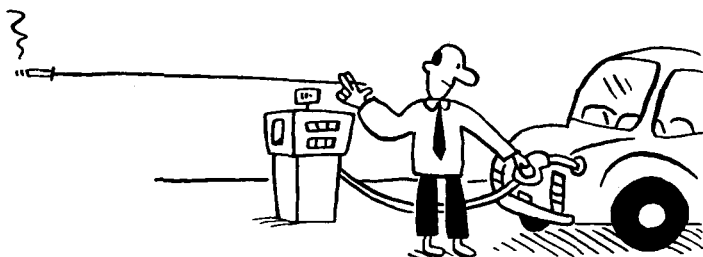


Some of these are retrieved or created in complicated processes whose names seem to say to the layman, "You will never understand what I am": naphtha reforming, catalytic cracking, hydrocracking, alkylation, isomerization. In one way or another, these processes transform hydrocarbons that are of little or no use in gasoline into useful hydrocarbons. In a hydrocracker, for example, great big hydrocarbon molecules are split into smaller molecules, yielding several high-octane blending components known collectively as hydrocrackate.

One of the most important post-lead octane-enhancers is butane, the stuff in cigarette lighters. Butane vaporizes at about 31° Fahrenheit at normal atmospheric pressure, but it dissolves easily in gasoline and has an octane rating of around 92. Blending it into gasoline not only raises the gasoline's octane but also enables refineries to improve their profit margins, since butane adds volume but costs a lot less to make than other gasoline components, and since ordinary refining processes yield more butane than cigarette lighters need.

Butane is a highly volatile substance. That is, it evaporates very readily. The wavy-looking air you see when you put gas in your car is mostly escaping butane—as good a reason as any for not smoking at gas stations.

Some volatility is necessary in gasoline. A motor fuel has



to evaporate before it can be burned in an engine. The fuel that goes into cylinders is a vapor, not a liquid. Once a car is up and running, vaporizing the gasoline is easy: the heat of the engine takes care of it. But starting a cold engine, especially on a cold day, requires a fuel that evaporates fairly readily all by itself.

Too much volatility causes problems, however. On a hot day (or on a cold day in a hot engine) excessively volatile fuels can cause a condition called vapor lock. This occurs when a pocket of evaporated fuel stymies the fuel pump, which can pump only liquids, and brings everything to a halt. Excessive volatility can also cause starting and restarting problems. As a result, gasoline makers sell different blends in different geographic regions at different times of the year. Some producers alter their blends each week to compensate for changes in the weather.

Highly volatile fuels also cause greater air pollution. All cars leak fuel vapors, even when they're not in use. The vapors seep out of carburetors, fuel injectors, and other engine parts. Such seeping vapors are known as evaporative

emissions. The more volatile the fuel, the higher the level of these emissions. The increasing use of butane as an octane-enhancer and fuel-extender has worsened the problem of emissions and the pollution they cause (alcohol worsens it too), and the EPA is considering new regulations to correct it. The regulations will probably put limits on the volatility of gasoline and might also require improved vapor-recovery systems on new cars.

A similar type of pollution is known as refueling emissions. These are vapors that accumulate in cars' fuel tanks as they empty and escape into the atmosphere when new fuel displaces them. California and the District of Columbia already require that gas nozzles be equipped with plastic collars that fit over tank openings and channel escaping vapors into underground recovery tanks. Similar systems may one day be required nationwide.

Detergents Fix a Fuel-Injector Problem

CONTROLS ON AUTOMOBILE EMISSIONS HAVE GIVEN us cleaner air. They've also given us more interesting automobiles. Cars in the 1960s were almost unbelievably inefficient, with huge engines and enormous appetites for gasoline. If the old 450-cubic-inch monsters of fifteen and twenty years ago had been engineered as carefully as today's dinky power plants, we'd have been able to drive them to the moon.

In building the efficient engines necessitated by environmental restrictions, automotive designers have both borrowed from and contributed to the technology of high-performance driving. My humble Subaru has a microprocessor-controlled multiport fuel-injection system that would have made almost any driver green with envy just a few years ago.

Sharper engineering has also made trouble for drivers. One problem it caused appeared three years ago. It involved precisely the sort of fuel-injection system I have in my Subaru.

Until fairly recently most cars didn't have fuel injectors. They had carburetors. A carburetor is a small, relatively simple device that receives gasoline from the fuel pump, allows it to mix with air, and, essentially, throws it at the engine block, letting the cylinders slurp up what they want. A fuel injector dispenses fuel in much more carefully measured amounts. The latest fuel-injection systems are incredibly precise. They give each cylinder exactly the amount of fuel that it needs, as determined by a tiny computer that monitors what the rest of the car is up to. This can produce big gains in fuel efficiency, emission control and engine performance. But the engineering tolerance are very fine. The fuel opening in one of these injectors is about two thousandths of an inch, so even a tiny deposit can gum up the works.

Multiport fuel-injection systems began appearing in American cars in significant numbers in the 1985 model year. Some drivers noticed problems almost immediately—within a few hundred miles. Their engines balked

stalled, and had trouble starting. The problem was traced to fouled injectors. General Motors sent a letter to the oil companies suggesting that their gasoline was at least partly to blame.

The big refiners and the car manufacturers work together fairly closely. Each industry keeps the other informed of anticipated product changes, and each generally follows a set of standard fuel specifications established voluntarily through a nonprofit group called the American Society for Testing and Material, or ASTM. The ASTM standard for automotive gasoline is called D-439. It spells out octane levels, seasonal and geographic ranges for volatility, and many other variables. I ordered a copy and then put it on a shelf where I keep a lot of things I never look at; it's full of numbers and graphs.

D-439 keeps the refiners and the car makers on more or less the same wavelength, but the injector problem was a surprise to everyone. There was no doubt that a problem existed. The big gasoline makers embarked on crash programs to solve it.

One of the first to offer a solution was Mobil. Like virtually all gasolines, Mobil's had long contained detergent additives, designed to keep carburetors and other engine parts free of deposits. You may have seen Mobil television commercials showing gasoline sloshing around, washing-machine-style, inside the O in the company's name. Mobil found that it could clean up fouled injectors by increasing the dosage of its standard carburetor detergent. It did so in its gasolines, and promoted its Super Unleaded Plus to mechanics and service managers as a solution to the multiport problem. Sales of Super Unleaded Plus rose 47 percent from 1985 to 1986.

Exxon also tried boosting its detergents, but wasn't satisfied with the results. An Exxon engineer told me that the company had had two goals in approaching the problem: to create a formula that would clean up injectors in a single tankful, and to make the formula available in both regular and premium. The company spent six months devising and testing new detergents, eventually settling on one called XCL-12.

XCL-12 was added to all Exxon unleaded gasoline beginning in March of last year. Other big refiners made similar changes at around the same time. These changes have greatly reduced the injector deposit problem; indeed, they have eliminated it for most drivers, many of



whom weren't aware that the problem existed in the first place.

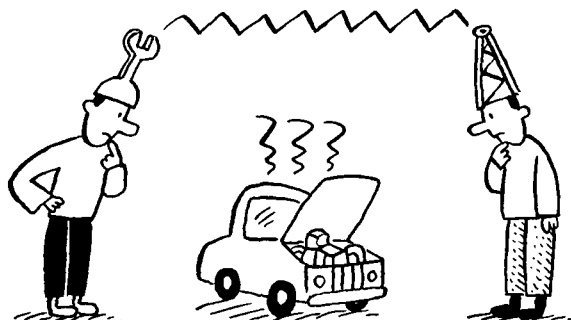
But car makers acknowledge that fuel-related engine trouble will become increasingly likely as automotive technology advances. A report last year on the multiport problem for the Society of Automotive Engineers referred to injector deposits as "the tip of intake-system deposit problems." The authors of the report, researchers at Chevron, had found that some detergents intended to clean injectors were dirtying intake valves—small valves on the cylinders that open to let fuel injectors squirt in fuel.

Engineers at BMW have been researching a similar problem since 1983. A few BMW drivers had begun having performance problems with their cars. BMW engineers performed exploratory surgery and discovered dirty valves. To find out what caused them, BMW asked six major oil companies to supply samples of their gasolines. BMW promised to share its findings privately with the six companies. To maintain confidentiality, the six fuels were identified only by code numbers. Each company knew its own code but not that of any of the others. The companies weren't even told which other companies had participated.

BMW ran the six gasolines in test engines and measured their effect on intake valves. It found that three of the gasolines produced fewer deposits than a reference gasoline with no additives, and three produced more. BMW engineers suspect that old-style carburetor detergents may be at least partly to blame. In an earlier test, gasoline containing alcohol was also found to foul the valves.

To solve the problem in its cars, BMW has offered affected customers a one-time valve cleaning (using ground walnut shells) and encouraged them to buy little bottles of a BMW detergent additive, which its dealers sell for about two dollars apiece. Drivers are supposed to add a bottle to their fuel tanks every time they fill up. A simpler and decidedly cheaper solution would be to buy Chevron gasoline. BMW's additive is made by Chevron. It's the same additive that Chevron puts in its gasoline. (It can also be bought in bottles from Chevron. The brand name is Techron.)

Other car manufacturers don't seem to be as worried about the BMW problem as BMW is. American car makers have been looking for the same deposits in their own cars but either haven't found them or haven't been concerned



by what they've seen. Still, they are looking out for similar problems and conducting studies of their own. BMW is conducting more tests, including a study of large fleets of cars in actual service. Curiously, deposits in BMWs driven in Germany are different from those in BMWs driven in the United States. The German deposits are smooth and sleek; the American deposits are round and bumpy, like cauliflower. The difference seems to be caused by differences in driving speed.

Shopping Brands

FOR MANY YEARS THE FEELING AMONG SMART SHOPPERS has been that all gasoline is alike. Consumers Union has long maintained that "gasoline is gasoline, whether it bears a well-known brand name or comes from an independent service station," as it affirmed in a brief article in the April, 1985, issue of its magazine, *Consumer Reports*. In support of its thesis, the article quoted Vic Rasheed, the executive director of the Service Station Dealers of America, as saying that "additives are primarily just advertising gimmicks." He also said, "If the branded and unbranded prices are close, most people would rather go to the branded dealers because they have some assurance of quality control. But it really doesn't matter."

Rasheed's opinion has changed since then. "Our current position," he told me recently, "is that there is a need to be very careful, very selective about gasoline today." He also said that the odds of buying inferior fuel at retail are higher "when you buy an unbranded gasoline or an independent brand, or some gasoline whose origin you really can't trace."

Rasheed's new position is less a flipflop than an acknowledgment that the world has changed. Until quite recently gasolines really were more or less alike, and most of the detergents they contained had little or no effect on engine performance. Now such additives can make a significant difference to many drivers. The change has created some exhilaration at the big oil companies. An Exxon engineer told me that the push to develop XCL-12 had been very exciting.

There's probably more excitement to come. Possible

fuel-related problems are of great concern to auto makers, who have lately begun to offer five-, six-, and seven-year warranties on some of their cars. None of them wants to have to provide expensive fuel-related maintenance for such extended periods.

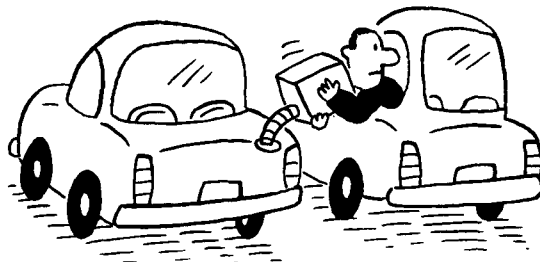
Many unbranded-gasoline dealers buy detergents and even gasoline from the big companies. But many of them don't. At the very least, drivers of cars with multiport injectors (which will soon be standard equipment on most cars) should be using fuel containing detergents known to keep injectors clean. For most such drivers, that probably means buying gasoline from stations with familiar names. Even among well-known brands, differences exist. Drivers should shop around if they notice performance problems. Some cars simply work better with some gasolines than with others.

Lawnmowers, too, I suppose. About nine months after being told I had bought bad gas, I decided I'd better do something about it. I still had about a gallon in a can in the garage. In all likelihood it had not been bad when the mechanic had said it was; it had been bought just six weeks before. But by now it was undoubtedly past its prime. How to get rid of it?

I didn't want to pour it down a drain or onto the ground. Gasoline is a dreadful pollutant. Because gasoline contains known and suspected carcinogens, even contamination of one part per million in drinking water could render it unpotable. (Leaking gasoline is a problem of enormous proportions, and one that will worsen in coming years as more and more underground storage tanks deteriorate with age.) So I took my can of bad gas down to my local gas station and asked the owner if he would get rid of it for me. He offered to pour it into his trash hopper. This struck me as a very bad idea, so I took my gas back home and let it sit a while longer.

Then the grass started to grow again. I had to get rid of my old gas so that I could buy some new. I thought about just pouring the old gas into my lawnmower anyway. But a year's worth of gummy residue, condensation, rust, and dirt would plug up the engine for sure.

So I did the only other thing I could think of. I looked around to be certain that no one was watching, and I put it in my wife's car. □



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BY GUY BILLOUT



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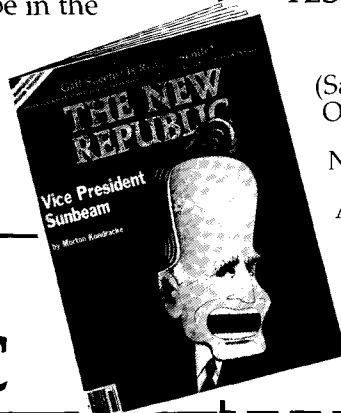
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A Short Story

THE WIDOW

BY BETH LORDAN



THE MORNING WARREN BOYD DROPPED DEAD IN HIS kitchen, he was the only living person on the farm. Just back of the barn two milk cows stood near each other in the light sun, staring across a small pasture toward three old apple trees. Farther off twelve heifers were working their way from a mud patch by a salt block down to a rock pile where blackberries were in bloom; they'd get to the shade of the willows about noon. The one cat had strayed from the first meadow into the yard. Unless one of the heifers took it into her mind to find her way out of the big pasture and into the road, or into some field and went back to grazing. The barn was empty. Up behind the vegetable garden a solitary lamb dozed under broad eucalyptus; near the back porch three laying hens murmured over small insects they found deep in the grass. The lilacs were gone by, and bees worked flowering weeds that had strayed from the first meadow into the yard. Unless one of the heifers took it into her mind to find her way out of the big pasture and into the road, or into some neighbor's garden, nobody would call Warren Boyd on the telephone and find out he was dead.

Warren's wife hovered, watching, in the upstairs bedroom, in her brown-flowered flannel nightgown, with her ankles long beneath her. Her name was Ann, and she'd been dead three years.

Giving up life had been harder for Ann than for Warren, who just walked into the broken square of sunlight in front of the sink and fell without thinking about it. She had let him go at last, only because she understood, suddenly, that

once she was dead she'd have time to devote herself to the study of Warren. She had devoted her efforts and attention to him for forty-two years, except for the few years when their daughter, Susan, was alive. But much of that time was spent just living—cooking, of course, and chores, and seeing other people, and peculiar things like Susan dying, with all that surprise and grief; and then giving attention to seasons and weather, deciding things and choosing between, arranging pillows so that she could fall asleep, sleeping itself, growing old. Her life had seemed endless and perverse, designed to keep her from the work of finding Warren out, which was what she had wanted to do since the first time she saw him in his splendor.

So when she was dying, seventy-one years old and rebellious, in a hospital up north, she had suddenly understood that the three wishes everyone talked about their whole lives were given out at the moment of death. She had felt again the beginnings of the great excitement that had come over her the first time she saw Warren Boyd transformed, the excitement that all that living had kept putting aside.

That first time, they'd been married about a year, and she knew Warren some, knew he was fussy about his eggs but would never complain, knew he would always sleep on the side away from the wall, however she arranged the bedroom, knew how his hair grew on the back of his neck, and that he got corns on his left foot but not on his right. They had come quickly to habits of living together. Every morning, in the dead dark of winter or the paler dark of

summer, she shut off the alarm and got up; if she was feeling tender, she'd take care not to let a draft come under the covers and chill him. Downstairs she'd put on the coffee and call once, "Warren!" back up the stairwell. By the time his breakfast was ready, he'd be there, dressed but not shaved, and neither of them talked over breakfast. He'd eat and go out to milk, and she'd dress in the bathroom off the kitchen while the dishes soaked in hot soapy water in the round white dishpan. Then she'd do them up, start the baking, water the ferns in the dim parlor, and go back up to the bedroom to make the bed and open the curtains. She hated to be done with the upstairs work before he came back from the barn; she liked best to be just beginning the bed when the screen door slammed as he came in. That way, by the time he finished shaving downstairs, she was in the kitchen getting ready to go out to the garden, or making a list of something, or sorting through something, and she could feel as busy and as inattentive to him as he always seemed in the mornings to her. Most mornings she'd gather up yesterday's dirty clothes and put them in the hamper, straighten the dresser tops, check that the clothes in the drawers were neat, run the dust mop under the bed, and shake the throw rug out the window three crisp snaps; then she'd go and stand at the window and watch for him to come out of the milk house before she finished the bed. She had once explained to herself, early in her marriage, that those minutes with the window open and the bedclothes turned back aired the bedding; she never doubted it again.

One early-summer morning she stood by the window with the blue-striped throw rug in her hand and the smell of ripe hay just reaching her from down below. She was thinking about jelly, for no particular reason, about steaming jelly dripping slowly through the pudding bag into a big glass bowl, when she saw her husband come out of the cool gloom of the milk-house doorway into the deep shadow cast by the barn. He walked as if he were under water, slowly and gracefully, his hands lifting slightly at every movement, every step unnaturally high and delicate. In every fold of his gray work clothes, in the hair on his head, and among the bristles of his unshaven face clung tiny air bubbles, gleaming like glass pearls. He stepped carefully to the edge of the shadow and stopped, a small smile sweet across his face as he turned his head slowly to look back at the barn, the bubbles shimmering in every detail of his person there in the cool shade.

Ann stared, struck thoughtless by this vision of her hatless young husband suddenly submerged. She scarcely breathed, feeling something like deep memory, and nearly cried out in rage when he stepped, at last, from the shadow onto the sunlit lawn, and his bubbles disappeared and his foot came down hard and ordinary in the light.

She was still at the window, holding the rug with both hands tight under her chin, when he called up the stairs, "Ann?" She didn't answer, though she tensed with dread that he might come up. "Ann? I'm going to Mike's, you need just tea and salt?" he called, still from the foot of the

stairs. From the blackboard, she thought, he knows it from the blackboard, fighting to recover the ordinary. "Ann?"

She could hear in his voice that he meant to come up, so she shouted back, angry and loud, "Yes!"

"Okay," he said. As she heard him go down the back steps, she went to the unmade bed, lay down, and covered her chest with the rug.

SHE NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE SUCH A THING AGAIN. That night, and for a few nights after, she went to bed early to avoid him. But time passed, haying came and passed, and the vision faded. She was eager to have it go, to fill its place again with the real Warren, his silences and his digestion, his pleasure at jokes he brought from Mike's store, his responsible worry over crops and equipment. They bought three more heifers that year, and the next farm went up for sale at a price they couldn't meet. In the spring they burned down the old pig shed and doubled their garden space; just after Christmas, Susan was born. Those were good, ordinary years—Ann thought so then, and her memory always held that time as wholesome, sturdy, and serious.

And then one night, when Susan was five and the summer night was loud and calm and Ann lay in bed alone, almost drowsing beneath the sheet, she heard the screen door slam and not slam again. A thought of Warren sitting on the back step in the dark came into Ann's mind, and with it came the thought of sitting quietly beside him in her nightdress in the night air. She got up and went to the window; from there she could see if a light was on in the barn, or if cigarette smoke came from near the back door invisible below her. No light in the barn, no sign or smell of smoke from below. Ann leaned within the drifting curtain, unalarmed, looking out over the quiet yard to the swarm of slow lightning bugs low in the apple tree. A rectangle of light from the back door and a square of light from the kitchen window lay across the short grass she had mowed that morning. The grass in the light seemed bleached. Ann thought of frost, of Susan's red boot top breaking iced puddles in the barnyard as she jumped down from the back of the truck where Warren had let her ride with the Christmas tree. Ann smiled, and then she saw Warren, over near the small shed where the lamb slept.

The shed was a heavy form in the dark, skirted and ruffled with the lighter shadows of burdocks, and in the dense dark the ground was black. Nearby, Susan's sandpile was only a lightening of the darkness, but Warren was bright, his hair clearly brown, with bits of gray showing like kernels of rice; his eyes were blue, and the clean undershirt he had put on after milking was as white as if hung on the line in clear sunlight. He stood with his hands high in the air, showing the darker dampness under his arms, and then he did a somersault on the black grass, his jeans a blur of faded denim coming down from the dark into the dark. Warren somersaulted again and then again, to



toward the window light and the door light laid like cloths on the grass.

Ann dropped to her knees as he tumbled, and all she knew was his brown and white and blue in the uncolored ark. She was triumphant and breathless as he came, revealed through the dark. She saw him roll toward and then into the spread house light, and his colors bleached in the yellow light, and his last roll landed him standing, drained, near the back step.

She knelt by the window a moment, and then a moment more, and she began to plan as her breath returned and her limbs reclaimed themselves. Through the screen came the sound and then the smell of a cigarette lit below. Ann

stood and turned; she went down the stairs and across the cool kitchen floor to the back door.

Warren sat on the step, his undershirt yellow in the light, his smoke hanging in the still air. She pushed open the screen door and he turned his head to her. She stepped out and let the door bang shut, and sat down where he shifted to make room for her.

"I heard you come out," she explained, and she put her hand almost shyly on his rounded back.

"Hot," he said, and nodded, smoking, looking off into the dark.

His back was dry. No blade of grass, no leaf of clover, no small twig or crushed insect, no proof that he had done

what she had seen him do. She watched the fireflies in the dark and heard the moths' quick small thuds on the screen, and she sighed. He drew again on the cigarette and snapped the butt in a long arc to the driveway. She smoothed her thin nightdress over her knees. That was the second time.

ALL SUMMER ANN KEPT WATCH; SHE AND SUSAN passed the days with kerchiefs tied over their hair against the fumbling accidental landings of June bugs. The garden flourished as never before, and hay prices dropped. Early evenings Warren would finish the milking and take Susan up to the pond in the west pasture to swim; she'd fall asleep beside him on the drive back down, and Ann would come out to carry her in from the truck. Mike sold his store to Paul the druggist and moved south; Warren killed a laying hen by mistake in September, and Ann pulled five leathery eggs from the body as Susan counted them, checking her facts for show and tell. Ann made apple butter, and some rainy evenings all three of them would play dominoes, keeping score on the back of an envelope.

But Ann watched Warren all that winter without another miracle, and all that spring. In the summer Susan caught a cold, and the cold went to her chest; in early August they took her to the hospital. She accepted the shots and the oxygen tent and the meals on trays as she had accepted the rest of her life, but in the last week of August she died.

Warren and Ann, numbed and terrified by the simplicity of Susan's death, were quiet and separate all through the winter, and Ann closed herself against the watching. The house was silent with their unshared grief. In the spring

they sold half the hatch of chicks, leaving unmentioned their memory of Susan's enchantment with them. Mike came back from the South and set up a small diner in town, where Warren often drank coffee mid-mornings with other farmers and the Baptist minister and anyone else who came in, while Ann dusted and polished and stayed indoors, away from the windows, even though the weather was fine and the chickens ran wild up and down the yard. A stranger bought the old hotel and converted it to apartments, though he kept the hotel bar open. In the fall, one night after everything was done, Warren and Ann sat in the silent parlor, Ann hemming curtains and Warren holding the paper unread on his lap. Warren sighed and got up and got his gray cap from the kitchen.

"I'm going into town for a while," he said.

She nodded and kept sewing. She heard the truck start and pause at the end of the driveway, and then roll off down the road for town. She worked on until midnight. Then she bit her thread and folded the flowered cloth neatly into the box beside her chair, went to the kitchen and turned off the backyard light, and went on up the stairs to bed.

Hours later a sudden silence woke her. She heard rain, and maybe thunder, before she felt that Warren was not in bed. She went to the window and saw the truck parked in the usual place. She went downstairs. The doors were still locked, and Warren was not there. She cupped her hands beside her eyes to look out the kitchen window.

Through the dark and the steady drizzle she saw Warren push open the door of the truck cab. He stepped out and down, paused before he swung the door shut, paused again with his hand against the truck. "Why, he's drunk!" Ann thought, astounded at this new possibility, after all

A SEASHELL FROM THE SEYCHELLES

Sally by the seashore, letting the seadrift
sift through her half-closed fist, holds
not only an ear-shaped shell
of abalone, and relics of timber felled
from an age-old harvest of wreckage
to rest again in a skeletal forest,
but all the sea once held:
pearled eyes and coraled bone,
and the nautilus's whorled orifice,
risen from its ocean spell
to sit like a long-abandoned oracle,
but (listen) to sing from the still small
throne of its body. . . .

My lady,
so little abides, now,
in the sound of those tides. Daily,

I've waited for your presence, for evidence, and found
the more the sea changes remains
into its own gains, the more I can explain
your silence. Let what's precious be
lost to most. At best, you are barely
fathomed in the shared depths
of a certain word. With hesitant steps,
I've waded into the sea's midst, hoping to see
merely your ghost. And what I've seen, turned shoreward
and to calm, seems more than
your boast. You've opened your palm.

—Brian Wickers

these years—a Warren who would drink more than a single bottle of beer. He stood there and lifted both hands to his face as if he had just awakened. He ran his hands up over his cheeks and eyes and forehead and pushed his gray cap back so far it fell off and landed behind him on the truck step.

Warren smiled and turned his head to look where the hat had gone. Then he straightened. He looked at the house, and, as he turned his arms in a low shrug, a soft brilliance rose from him. Like mist off a barn roof, something curled from the surfaces of Warren, from his hatless head and his open barn jacket, from the thick palms of his hands. He raised his hands slowly higher, and the mist around him flickered in pale colors. He turned a full slow circle on the gravel, his arms out, the bright, thin color trailing about him like veils in the rain. His face was wet. He stood for a long moment, with his arms lifted wide and the pale mist licking around him, and then he turned again, bent carefully for his cap, and stood, extinguished in the light of a cloudy dawn. He adjusted the gray cap carefully, and walked off to the barn. That was the third time, and Ann began to understand, though she didn't think of it as love, and she began again to watch.

FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES TOGETHER, BETWEEN the buying and selling and choosing and changing, as they again found ways of living together that were easy and pleasant, she kept watch. Warren was transformed for her again and again, but never completely, never sufficiently. As the duties of living centered more and more on the needs of her own body and his, she grew frustrated at the solitude of her vigil, but she had always known that nothing she could ask or admit would help her discover whether he knew of his splendor, or whether he took care to hide or display it.

So when the three wishes came to her, as she lay with her gray hair flattened against her head in that hospital bed, Ann chose to remain with Warren until his death. She clearly understood her intentions: without breathing or sleeping or pain or work, she would spend her time at the windows, and she would watch Warren without pause. And if nothing changed, if the splendors came and faded in the now familiar and unsatisfying way even as she watched so steadily, perhaps at the moment of his death he would be able to see or discover what that splendor had been, what he had meant by it.

In those three years she saw Warren mysterious a few more times, and she saw and heard other things. She watched him come up from the barn early on autumn mornings, through the leaching light of the floodlight, and she saw, as she had not before, his reluctance in that empty space, how he walked with his head doggedly lowered as if he would stop forever in the emptiness if he dared see. She heard him, evenings, moving uncertainly, like a broken habit, down in the kitchen; she learned of his secret love for pork chops, and the smell of the frying chops

came to signal suppertime as the dishwater smell of boiling potatoes once had. She traced the visions through her memory, trying to find the pattern. She learned to notice his hats; he wore the red Agway cap only to the barn and his own fields, the stained white Sherwin-Williams Paint cap whenever he meant to hammer or saw, and the plain gray cap for town and when he was sad. She learned that she would see the visions only when he went hatless. The hats were her only firm discovery about the mystery in all three years of waiting by the windows, and so by the morning Warren died, she was glad, glad to be at the moment of her greatest opportunity.

Ann heard him fall, and she waited upstairs until she was certain that the silence in the kitchen was utter and final before she went down. Warren lay on his side in front of the sink, with his left arm stretched out and pointing toward the kitchen table, where the *Weekly Shopper* lay open. His red Agway hat was firmly on his head, and Ann could see the gray hairs spiking out the opening in the back. The sunshine was bright across his gray-shirted shoulders. Ann knelt down beside him. Outside, the chickens kept up a steady muttering that hid the sound of the mowing machine up in the field that Warren had sold the year before to Mike's son.

Ann waited and waited, and the patch of sunlight on the kitchen floor began to shrink. Finally she became afraid, and sat back against the cupboards under the sink, and pulled her knees up to her chest. She watched: in a summer suddenness the kitchen grew dim. Ann knew he had taken his first wish and was gone, without even knowing she was there.

The two milk cows were moaning out by the barn, and the chickens had gone into the shed as the evening began to come down. Ann lowered her face to her knees, but she stayed by the cupboards, hugging her shins, her knees tight to her chest. The telephone began to ring in the living room. Ann waited. The telephone stopped.

Ann sat the whole night there on the kitchen floor, bearing the knowledge that he had gone. She had never imagined such a weight; it settled over and through her, a dark cold.

In the morning Mike's son knocked at the kitchen door and peered through the screen at Warren's body there by the table. He peered and went away, and Ann lifted her face from her knees. She rocked a little, watching Warren's stillness. Well, she thought, and let a ripple of bitter disappointment rise through her, felt the emptiness flow in like light behind it. Well, she thought again. Carefully she let down her arms, released her thin legs, and rose.

She stepped past him and started back upstairs, as if she had work to do. Over the third step, just where the stairs turned, she remembered how Warren had shimmered that first time, and as she stopped, the sweet red smell of raspberries came to her, and she could almost feel the steam from the cooking jelly rising into her face. She went on up to the bedroom and stood among the curtains at the open window, and made her second wish, for tears. □

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SWIRL IT CLEAN

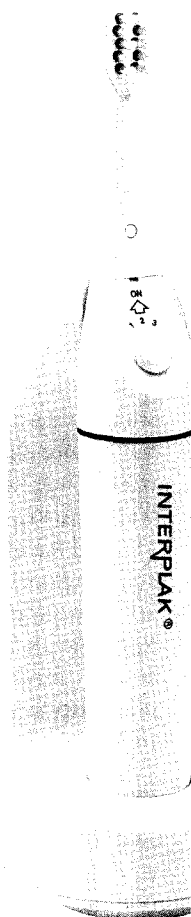


Your garden hose becomes a powerful cleaning machine with Swirlon's Mark II system. The heart of this system is the snap-on power brush—a 5" hydro-turbine spinning inside an

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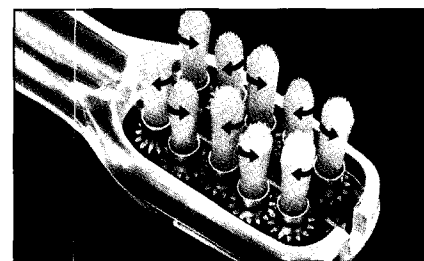


YOUR SMILE IS BEAUTIFUL



But you're only fooling yourself if you think it's proof of healthy teeth and gums. The unseen enemy is a natural mouth substance deposited on the teeth—plaque. Unchecked, plaque develops into rock-hard tartar behind which decay breaks down the tooth enamel and invades the soft, sensitive substructure. You have to remove the plaque before it hardens to prevent the process. Until recently there was no easy solution to this problem, but now there's Interplak, a precision-engineered, university-tested, three-speed plaque removal instrument. Its 10 independently driven bristle tufts rotate around their own axes: each tuft spins in the direction opposite to the spin of its neighbor at 4,200 rpm. The bristles are soft and rounded, adhering to dentistry recommendations, so that virtually every particle of plaque—98% of it—is removed gently and without irritation. Interplak even reaches between teeth and around orthodontic braces. Children think it's fun, so they're eager to brush. Interplak is cordless and easily stores in a free-standing or wall-mounted recharger/holder. Individual color-coded brush heads are available. The Interplak Home Plaque Removal Instrument with charger and two brush heads. \$99.95 #X1110. Two additional brush heads \$29.95 #X1122.

The counter-rotational movement of Interplak tufts clean plaque from between teeth and under the gum line.



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The counter-rotational movement cleans plaque.

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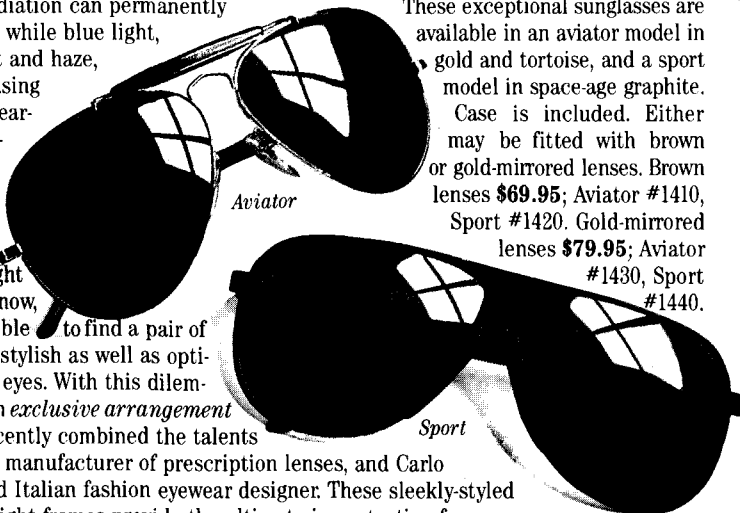
COMPUTING ON A SMALL SCALE

This incredible pocket computer, is no larger than a credit card and a mere 1/8" thick! The Personal Data Bank makes it possible to create a database; add, subtract or edit information; store up to 125 names and telephone numbers in the big 2K+ memory bank; then, at the touch of a button, view it on the two-line easy-to-read, 20-character liquid crystal display. Maintain a travel expense record, enter important messages or appointment reminders—then scroll through all your entries alphabetically or numerically. Punch in a security code to safeguard confidential data. The Personal Data Bank also functions as a calculator. U.S./metric converter and Fahrenheit/Celsius converter. Use it anywhere in the world. \$34.95 #1480. Long-life battery included.



FROM US ONLY FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation can permanently damage your eyes while blue light, scattered by fog, dust and haze, prevents us from focusing sharply and seeing clearly. Medical studies indicate that blue light can impair vision. Up to 50% of night vision can be lost by overexposure to bright light during the day. Until now, it was all but impossible to find a pair of sunglasses that were stylish as well as optically healthy for your eyes. With this dilemma in mind, through an *exclusive arrangement* with Insight B, we recently combined the talents of Sola B, the leading manufacturer of prescription lenses, and Carlo Alberto, the renowned Italian fashion eyewear designer. These sleekly-styled sunglasses in lightweight frames provide the ultimate in protection for your eyes. They block out 98% of the blue light and 100% of the UV radiation emitted by the sun. Insight B sunglasses *do not* distort color perception and are the *only* ophthalmic-quality sunglasses that meet the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) color recognition specifications.



Aviator

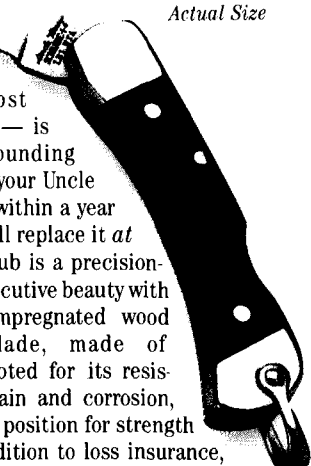
These exceptional sunglasses are available in an aviator model in gold and tortoise, and a sport model in space-age graphite. Case is included. Either may be fitted with brown or gold-mirrored lenses. Brown lenses **\$69.95**; Aviator #1410, Sport #1420. Gold-mirrored lenses **\$79.95**; Aviator #1430, Sport #1440.

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UPDATED CLASSIC TIMEPIECE

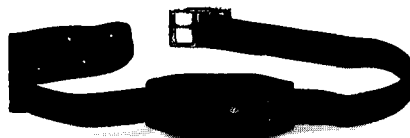
The Gruen Curvex, one of the most famous watches of all time, was designed in 1935 with an exclusive curved case and movement that conformed to the shape of the wrist. If you're lucky enough to have inherited one, you know how much they're worth. Now the Gruen watch company of Switzerland, founded in 1874, is once again offering the Curvex, at a fraction of the collector's item price. These precision watches are made from the original molds, and are extensively hand crafted. The only change since 1935 has been the addition of a modern Swiss quartz movement, accurate to within a minute per year. The case is 10 micron heavy 22 karat gold plate, fitted with a curved mineral crystal and a French pigskin strap. Men's Curvex **\$199.95** #1500. A woman's version also is available, a little smaller and without second hand. Women's Curvex **\$199.95** #1510. The original Curvex by Gruen.



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Flea and tick season is the bane of existence for most dogs and cats — and their owners. Pets suffer tremendous itching and pain from these pesky little varmints, not to mention the injury animals can cause themselves from continuous scratching and biting. Now there's a 100% safe, veterinarian-tested remedy that eliminates the use of poisonous chemicals and instant bathing, dipping, spraying and powdering your favorite pet. The electronic flea collar employs a pulse modulated burst circuit (PMBC) to create such an intolerable noise level, inaudible to humans and pets, that the critters hastily abandon their host animal. This electronic collar works on two lithium cells (included) for six to eight months, and focuses on a four-foot zone of protection. Two torsecent reflectors on the collar make your pet more visible at night. **\$39.95** #1030.



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FASHION

RALPH LAUREN'S ACHIEVEMENT

He has built an empire out of our nostalgia for a lost age

BY HOLLY BRUBACH

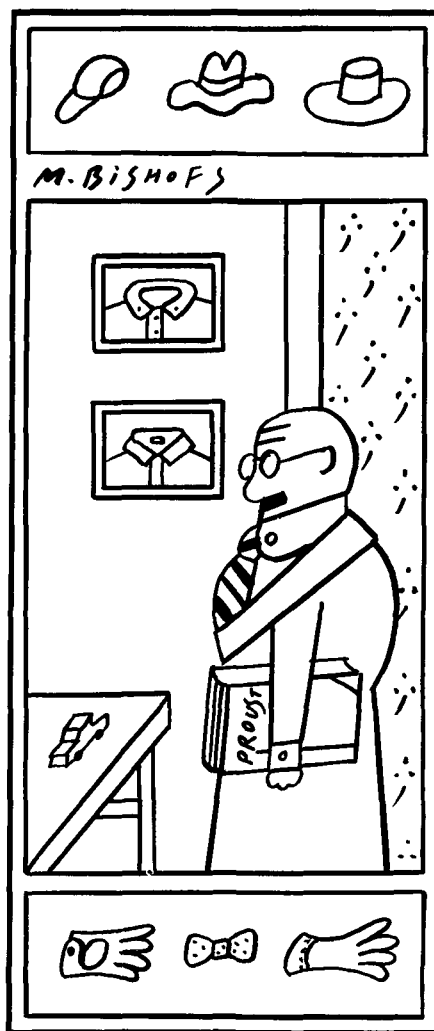
IN THE LITTLE more than a year since Ralph Lauren's flagship Polo store opened in the old Rhineland mansion, at Seventy-second Street and Madison Avenue, in New York, it has become a cultural landmark, an "instant classic," to borrow a term Lauren's publicists once used to describe the success of his women's perfume. Tourists overheard planning their rounds of the Upper East Side museums now include the store on their agendas: "Today we're doing the Whitney, Ralph Lauren, and the Frick. . . ." On any given afternoon its many rooms are filled with people milling distractedly about, their steps slow, their eyes anxious for fear that they might miss something. They are, for all intents and purposes, on a house tour. They call each other's attention to the antique steamer trunks stored high on shelves above the display cases, to the violin resting alongside a scroll of sheet music, to the antique Waterford crystal chandelier; they admire the Art Deco green glass panels etched with polo players (relics of the Westbury Hotel's Polo Lounge, before its recent renovation) and the gilt-and-mirror vitrine (from Cartier in Paris); they smile when they come to the boys' department, where antique model racing cars are strewn on the bottom of an armoire, like toys on the floor of a closet; they climb the magnificent hand-carved mahogany staircase, its walls lined with gilt-framed hunting scenes and portraits of somebody's ancestors; they sign the guest book, lying open beneath an enormous arrangement of fresh flowers on a table in the entrance hall. Every last detail is perfect, right down to the books left scattered about as if someone had just been reading them: the leather-bound *Nicholas Nickleby*, resting on a table next to the elevator; the three-volume *Birds of the British Islands*, stacked on an ottoman in the boudoir; the collectors' edition of the works of Eugène Sue, standing on the mantel. Throughout the store young, pink-cheeked men and women

greet the crowds, seeming less like salespeople than members of the family, quietly steering visitors away from the private quarters. "How are you today?" they say, or "Good morning," but never "Can I help you?" With tidy fires burning in every grate, the beds (on the top floor, the home-furnishings department) turned down for the night, the teacups on the end table, the house looks lived in, like a home. One begins to wonder what it must be like after closing, when the soigné inhabitants surely retire to their rooms and dress for dinner, reconnoitering for drinks among the men's

shoes in the library before going upstairs to dine among the suits.

This house is the grand seat of Lauren's far-reaching empire, a monument to his phenomenal success which has been praised by some people and decried by others, often for precisely the same reasons. He is either an impassioned connoisseur or a shameless plagiarist, appropriating objects, eras, and styles and signing his name to them. (Last December, *The New York Times* ran a story about "the Laurenization of New York," documenting his influence on other merchants' displays, as if the notion of Victorian Christmas had never existed until Lauren discovered it.) Either he has brought the classic virtues of men's tailoring to bear on women's clothes or he has consigned women to wearing modified versions of the clothes that men wear. He epitomizes American fashion: either at its best, easygoing and glamorous, derived in equal parts from the great outdoors and Hollywood movies or at its worst, contrived, based on received notions and images, with no affinity for the body and no flair for design. Either he is the Great American Success Story (a biography is under way), a self-made man, now personally worth more than \$300 million, living in the world he has envisioned, outfitted, and furnished, or he is a playactor, a Jew pretending to the life of the landed gentry.

Lauren was born Ralph Lifshitz, in the Bronx, in 1939, and raised in a four-room apartment overlooking Moshol Parkway. His surname was changed when he was seventeen—by his father, according to some versions of the story by Ralph and his brother Jerry, according to others. He studied business at the City College of New York, worked as a salesman at Bloomingdale's and Brool Brothers, and peddled ties. In 1967 he persuaded Beau Brummel, a men's clothing manufacturer, to let him design a line of neckties, which were four inches wide at a time when the standard width was two and a half, and made from patterned silks that looked like upholstery fabrics. Building on the ties' success, Lauren branched out into a line of men's wear; then women's wear; and eventually fragrances, linens, leather goods and luggage, shoes, and—last year—furniture. Apart from a financial crisis in 1978, which prompted him to restructure the business, Lauren's expansion has been brisk and uninterrupted. And as his business has expanded he has consolidated his image.



Lauren's men's wear was admired early on for its quality (he insisted on all natural fibers at a time when other designers routinely used synthetic blends) and its cut, which seemed to be for an opinionated Brooks Brothers customer who had traveled the world and brought home a few improvements. For the movie of *The Great Gatsby* he outfitted Robert Redford as Jay Gatsby, the man with shirts by the dozen. Lauren established himself as an authority in men's tailoring just as the notion of androgyny was beginning to seem sexy and appealing. Women dressed in men's tuxedo shirts and pants, ties, and hats, as Diane Keaton did in *Annie Hall*, wearing clothes designed by Lauren. He offered women scaled-down models of fine men's shirts, fitted tweed hacking jackets, skirts pleated at the waist like men's trousers.

In the early seventies Lauren also laid claim to the western style, with chambray shirts, corduroy prairie skirts, separates in denim, chamois, and suede—a rugged, casual look that celebrated the frontier spirit and nicely dovetailed with a then widespread longing on the part of thousands of city-dwellers for a pair of cowboy boots. Soon Lauren appeared in his own advertisements, silver-haired, suntanned, smiling, wearing a work shirt and faded dungarees, at home on the range. The folk-artsy, loving-hands-at-home side of his work—sweaters depicting a schoolhouse, lace-collared blouses—has gradually merged with this western look in a category that might best be labeled Americana, perpetuated now in a separate collection, called Roughwear.

Lauren is still turning out high-class haberdashery for men and women, but lately its style has come to be indistinguishable from his Anglophilia. Lauren's English phase got off the ground around the time of *Brideshead Revisited* and has run right up to the present, seemingly encompassing such cultural milestones as *Chariots of Fire*, *Out of Africa*, and the Great Treasure Houses of Britain exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington.

Lauren occasionally works in other veins, among them a bright-colored, plashy-printed style of resort clothing that at its most casual suggests the beach at the Hamptons and at its most formal calls to mind Rick's Bar in *Casablanca*. In some years, some seasons, his references are pointed. In others they are generic as the monogram embroidered

last spring on his women's blouses, a tangle of lines that look as if they ought to form letters but don't. Still, time and again Lauren returns to the tunes he knows best—one an American anthem, the other a stately hymn to the upper class—and it is in these that his voice is heard most distinctly.

LAUREN HAS PERSISTENTLY denied that his clothes are fashion, and while it's true that he doesn't engage in the seasonal variations on hemlines and silhouettes that occupy most couturiers, there is something disingenuous about this claim. More, perhaps, than any other designer of our era, he has anticipated our collective longings with such split-second timing that he has managed to produce what we wanted next, just before we realized that *that* was what we wanted. In this sense his work has consistently been at fashion's very height. Lately our appetite has been for tradition, as we've struggled to make the past somehow continuous, to keep it alive in the moment at hand. This effort manifests itself in any number of ways, from campaigns to preserve our architectural heritage to a newfound enthusiasm for debutante balls to the rediscovery of silent films. For his part, Lauren makes clothes distinguished by a certain dapper stodginess, reprising a style long associated with old families and old money, and designing furnishings that appear to be antique but nonspecific, so that they manage never to look like exact reproductions.

But neither do they have any life of their own. Wandering through his store, one can't help but be struck by how incidental the clothes, which are totally lacking in "hanger appeal," seem to the overall picture. Even his home furnishings are best seen in context. It is the setting that makes sense of them for us. In fact, the full complement of Lauren's achievement can best be seen not in his products but in his advertisements and his stores, in which he fully articulates the vision he is marketing.

Lauren's ads, ingeniously photographed by Bruce Weber, depict fair-skinned, fine-boned people of all ages—or rather little girls, young women, and men of all ages—but none of the Third World types chosen to be the Benetton stores' ambassadors to the public, or the frowsy white trash that inhabits the ads of Georges Marciano. The scenarios, which generally run to ten or twelve pages, have in the past included a visit

to a family swathed in pinstripes, herringbones, Harris tweeds, silk paisleys, and fur-collared cashmeres, as they lounge about what looks to be one of the stately homes of England, complete with chintz-slipcovered chairs, back issues of *Country Life*, a canister of walking sticks in the hall, and two resident yellow labs; and an African safari, the slightly sunburned participants resplendent in straw hats and khaki, white linen, and suede, the tea table set with a silver service, a Land Rover in the background, a cuddly lion cub draped over one man's shoulders. The most recent was a field trip to an artist's weathered studio somewhere in the tropics (in the grand tradition of Gauguin's sojourn in Tahiti, perhaps), a room strewn with old rattan furniture and picture frames, a half-finished canvas on the easel, the painter himself wearing a shirt and tie, Prince of Wales plaid trousers, and navy-blue Keds-style sneakers, the woman at his side (his model, his muse?) in a strapless flower-sprigged sundress and thongs. In stark contrast to the freneticism that prevails in most fashion photography, Lauren's people exude dignity, tranquility, and preoccupation—their minds are elsewhere, far from the clothes they're modeling. They look as if they've simply been observed during the quiet course of an average day—at home, at the club, on vacation. They are, clearly, private people, not in the least flamboyant, and yet when faced with the camera's gaze they meet it steadily; at other times they stare off into the middle distance, deep in thought.

In advertisements for Lauren's Home Collection there are no people. Still, the rooms look less like decorators' showrooms than like living quarters conveniently glimpsed when the occupants were out. Among last winter's designs was one for a slate-blue room dominated by a huge Victorian carved mahogany bed, dressed in paisley, pinstriped, and windowpane-plaid sheets and topped with a claret velvet comforter, on which a fur coat is nonchalantly draped; in the background stands a zebra-patterned wing chair, a pedestal displaying a marble sculpture of a man's head, and a grand piano topped with pictures in silver frames and a vase filled with white peonies. One half expects to see Noel Coward seated at the keyboard. But whether the rooms are empty or occupied, the approach is the same—always photojournalistic, persuading us that this world we see before us actually ex-

ists, that events are taking place in it even as we peruse a magazine. These pictures are the visual equivalent of eavesdropping and, better than anything else he has produced, they illustrate Lauren's conscientious efforts to create what he has called "the whole atmosphere of the good life."

The message telegraphed by these ads is that Lauren's clothes are for people whose lives are privileged, satisfying, comfortable, tasteful, leisurely, even luxurious—in short, better than the average person's life may be at the moment, but not beyond imagining. Here is a paradise, but one that is possible on earth, inhabited by people who qualify as aristocrats—if not by their blue bloodlines, then by their refined and sensitive natures. They are also WASPs. Not since Mainbocher dressed the young society matrons of the forties and fifties has a designer explicitly invoked such snob appeal in his clothes. Some critics have roundly condemned Lauren for marketing a fantasy package of the WASP life, as if it were his to sell; some have looked the other way. But deep down there seems to run a current of resentment, grounded in the bitter notion that a Jew from the lower middle class isn't entitled to the style of the Connecticut gentry. One executive of a tweedy New York men's store told me not long ago, "We *are* what Ralph Lauren is trying to be." Remarks like this have a dismayingly anti-Semitic sound, but they also beg a question: Is it objectionable for someone to affect a style he admires, if he wasn't born to it? It is, after all, a free country.

When Lauren re-creates the look of an English country house, or of the Adirondack "camps" that were wealthy New Yorkers' wilderness retreats in the early part of this century, or of the manor houses on the north shore of Long Island, the result is always recognizably Lauren's, not to be mistaken for the real thing. His renditions are more emphatic and spiffier than the originals, his colors bright instead of faded, his effects a little too studiously achieved. Like a lot of Americans, he probably formed his first impressions of the world beyond his immediate neighborhood at the movies. One imagines that his Paris is the Paris of *Gigi*, his Wild West that of *High Noon*, his Main Line Philadelphia the house where Katharine Hepburn lived in *The Philadelphia Story*. His career may indeed be the Great American Success Story, not so much because he rose from

hand-me-downs to vast riches as because he has re-created the world according to his imagination and then re-created himself as the sort of person who would live in it.

"I was a New York kid playing basketball, playing baseball," he told one interviewer. "The clothes were a dream. . . . a setting, part of a world." He told another of his job as a glove salesman, driving around Long Island with his box of samples strapped into the passenger seat of a used Morgan: "I was twenty-two, and I was wearing custom-made suits. I thought I was Douglas Fairbanks." At one point he considered becoming a history teacher, because he liked the idea of dressing in tweed jackets with suede patches at the elbows and smoking a pipe.

"My clothes sell," he contends, "because I'm the consumer, and I haven't lost touch with that." What makes his images so resonant is not only that they embody our fantasies of what it must be like to lead a certain kind of life but that they seem to embody his fantasies too. His inspirations are intensely personal. His Home Collections have closely paralleled his own houses: a tropical retreat in Jamaica, a 6,000-acre working ranch in Colorado, a beach house at Montauk, an apartment in Manhattan. Those who know him report that he has never lost his childlike delight in a new toy. On the desk in his office are miniature models of the racing cars he owns.

Lauren is in a sense the quintessential designer for the newly rich, proving by his own example that enough money can buy anything, including the semblance of tradition, a facsimile past—not a pedigree, perhaps, but the things pedigreed people own. And that is what counts, according to Lauren's view of the world. The crux of a person's identity, the experience of being that person, the aura of urbanity or erudition or sportsmanship that surrounds him, resides in the trappings, not in the person himself. There are shortcuts. One needn't ride to the hounds, for example, to wear jodhpurs. (Lauren wore them to cut the ribbon at the opening of his New York store last year.) One needn't be well read, so long as one surrounds oneself with books. One needn't play the piano, so long as one has a piano. In short, one can be whoever one wants to be. Or—more accurately—one can seem to be whoever one wants to be. There is in all of this something touchingly naive.

IN THE WINDOW of his store on Madison Avenue, on a royal-blue flag edged in gold silk fringe and draped over a table, Lauren displays his Achievement. According to W. A. Copinger, in *Heraldry Simplified*, a man's Achievement is defined as his "coat of arms with all the exterior ornaments of the shield, together with the quarterings duly marshalled in order," and it signals his identity and ancestry to any passing armorer. According to a friend in London, an amateur expert, the motif—or, frankly, heraldic pastiche—Lauren has chosen for himself would be entered in the registers of Garter King of Arms, kept at the College of Arms, on Queen Victoria Street, in London, in these terms:

Crown. A circle of gold, issuing therefrom four crosses patée and four fleurs-de-lis, arranged alternately: from the crosses patée arise two golden arches ornamented with pearls, crossing at the top under a mound, surmounted by a cross patée, also gold, the whole enriched with precious stones. The cap is of crimson velvet.

Arms. Quarterly: first, Azure, two lions passant in pale, or; second, Gules, a gridiron, or; third, Or, a bend sinister azure; fourth, Azure, three fleurs-de-lis in chevron, or; the whole encircled with a garter, azure, ensigned "EST MCMLXVII," or.

Compartiment. A triumphal wreath of laurel, argent.

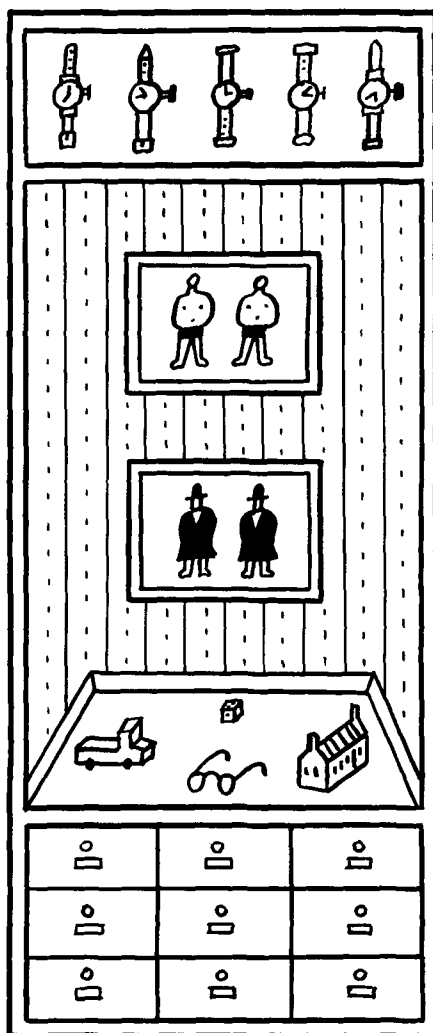
Motto. POLO.

Lauren's Achievement was probably pieced together by one of his art directors, whose concerns, we may imagine were purely graphic. Nevertheless, it is laden with meanings, among them the implication that Lauren's ancestry on his father's side can be traced to two lions (variation on the Romulus and Remus story, perhaps); the improbable claim that his mother is somehow descended from Saint Lawrence, a martyr grille over red-hot coals (the gridiron) and monk; the assertions that Lauren is also descended from a bastard (the bend sinister) and, lastly, from a roly-poly Capetian king of France. In heraldry, group of three are almost always laid out in triangle, reflecting the coat of arms's origin as a medieval T-shirt—two symbols at the top, indicating the width of the shoulders, the point of the triangle at the waist. Lauren's arrangement in the fourth quarter—one fleur-de-lis at the top, two at the bottom—is upside down, thereby conjuring up an image Humpty-Dumpty.

Lauren apparently takes it for granted that by divorcing symbols from their contexts, he can unburden them of their specific meanings and yet somehow leave their general sense intact. If his coat of arms isn't meant to be taken literally, its suggestion of aristocratic glamour surely is. Likewise, he strips objects and clothes of their function and expects them to retain their integrity. But a ranch hand wears dungarees because they're practical for roping cattle, not because he likes the way they look; an English country gentleman wears flannels and tweeds because they're suited to his climate and his leisure; an artist wears what's comfortable; a fisherman, a golfer, or a huntsman wears the gear appropriate to his sport. At first glance Lauren's approach to these many genres strikes us as purely superficial, but on second thought it seems to spring from some deep restlessness and discontent. Like a lot of people who make their living in the fashion business, Lauren is ironically enamored of people for whom clothes are not a self-conscious means of expression but a function of the lives they lead. Oh, to be all caught up in something other than fashion and still have style! The instinct behind this notion is, I think, a sound one, an attempt to affirm that there's something more to life than clothes. But, sadly, Lauren's only notion of how to go about getting beyond clothes to whatever else life might have to offer seems to be to dress the part of someone who never gives clothes a second thought. This, of course, changes nothing.

Lauren is not so much a designer as a connoisseur, calling our attention to the things he appreciates. Other designers, masters of fashion, like Yves Saint Laurent, Emanuel Ungaro, Valentino, Giamos, Geoffrey Beene, trade on images that are specifically upper class but work in terms that are inventive and abstract. Lauren deals in the familiar, and his charms are loaded. One looks at an outfit by Saint Laurent and is informed by the sophistication of its cut and the sumptuousness of its fabric that the woman wearing it must be wealthy. One looks at an outfit by Lauren and concludes that the woman wearing it is wealthy because that is the way wealthy women supposedly look.

In books like Sinclair Lewis's *Dodsworth* and almost anything by Charles Dickens, in movies like *Alice Adams*, *The Promoter*, and *Stella Dallas*, in *Pygmalion* and, more recently, in *Me and My Girl*,



people imitate their betters, only to be punished for their ambition (sometimes) and to learn that their betters aren't really better off after all in any of the ways that matter. In Lauren's version of the story, however, upward striving not only goes unpunished, it is applauded as the apotheosis of a self-made man. He ascends to the realm of the rich and discovers it to be a far nicer world than the one the middle class inhabits; he savors its every detail. This is the romance, an American parable in the manner of popular fiction like *Ellis Island* and confirming that America is still the land of opportunity, that the path to the top may be narrow but it's open. We look at Lauren in his various poses and think, Oh, come off it, but all the while some sentimental voice in our head is saying, Well, good for you. And the moral to be drawn from his story is reassuring: if he has acquired all this for himself, then it's accessible to us, too.

Lauren plays on our ambivalence about the upper class. We grant him the license to pretend to a grandeur that isn't

his by birth because we are disillusioned with the rich. The trials of Claus von Bulow, the contest over Seward Johnson's will, the indictment of Ivan Boesky, and *The Two Mrs. Grenvilles* have taught us that the upper class is corrupt. The rich, who occupy that place on high that the rest of us have been striving to get to, are steadily slipping in our esteem, disinheriting themselves from the appurtenances of their class. These people, we think, don't deserve what they've got. Their houses, their clothes, their antiques, their cars, should be in the hands of people who can appreciate them. If the rich won't play their part as stewards of the finer things in life, then those things should be awarded to people who will. This is, appropriately enough, the age of "the democratization of polo," with members of "a new breed of wealthy people" taking lessons at the Greenwich Polo Club, according to a recent article in *The New York Times*. Lauren picks up our fantasy of the rich where the rich themselves have left it off. Look, he says, good news! The things you've always coveted, things that in the past belonged exclusively to a privileged few, are now in the public domain. Help yourself. It is up to you to carry on this exquisite tradition.

And yet there is something faintly absurd about the people who heed this call, and about Lauren himself. Their presumption may go unpunished by us mortals, but built into the unwritten laws that govern this life is the gods' revenge: that a working ranch and dungarees do not make a cowboy nor an estate and a walking stick a country gentleman; that the trappings of another person's life cannot impart the dignity of his experience; that an identity is something to be earned, not acquired. In the end there is something oppressively sad about the flotsam of the upper class that has washed up on the deck of Lauren's flagship: the photographs of prep-school crew teams, rows of staunch-looking boys whose names nobody knows; the now meaningless trophies that must once have loomed terribly important; the lovingly chosen presents to commemorate some special event, the people and the day long forgotten. In a showcase on the first floor, in the men's department, is a horn tobacco canister, silver-trimmed, on the front of which is engraved, "To father on the occasion of his silver wedding, 15th October 1910." It is for sale. □



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HEALTH

SNAKE OIL

Don't believe everything you hear about dietary fats

BY ELLEN RUPPEL SHELL

WE LOVE DIETARY fats—and the more we learn how bad they are for us, the more sophisticated we become about consuming them. Gourmets who forgo such plebian pleasures as doughnuts, french fries, and thick shakes can be found ordering croissants, premium ice cream, and pâté. Just why people seem to prefer fat over lean is still something of a mystery to food scientists. Some suggest that fat, although not necessarily flavorful in itself, serves as a carrier for the flavor molecules that give foods what we think of as their characteristic taste. Others suggest that the taste for fat evolved as a protective trait, to help primitive man stave off starvation. Dietary fat is easily stored in the body—it requires less energy to be converted into body fat than either starch or protein. This was good news for the scrawny Neanderthal but is not for the office worker with a craving for smothered pork chops.

Whatever the reason, for most Americans a true low-fat diet is a stern, unfriendly thing. The American Heart Association's recommendation that we consume no more than 30 percent of our calories in fat, then, comes as a hard blow. Thirty percent may seem like a lot. Fats are, after all, one of three major sources of calories, and so allowing them nearly a third of our culinary space sounds reasonable. But fat has nine calories per gram—two and a quarter times the calories of protein or carbohydrates—so a little goes a long way toward tipping the nutrient balance.

Conventional wisdom has it that one can minimize feelings of deprivation while maintaining good health by substituting one fat for another, in particular vegetable fat for animal fat. This has led to some deceptive marketing practices, such as the labeling of foods that contain vegetable fat as being beneficial to cardiovascular health. The distinctions among saturated fats, unsaturated fats, and cholesterol have become clouded in

the rush to promote some foods as beneficial while casting aspersions on others. There is, in fact, no proof that eating any kind of fat will reduce the risk of cancer or heart attack, and most fats seem to increase the risk of one or both of these. Perhaps the most surprising news is that *dietary* cholesterol, long considered the most pernicious of foods, seems to have little effect on *blood* cholesterol when eaten without accompanying saturated fat.

ALL FAT MOLECULES are composed of fatty acids, which are made of long chains of carbon atoms flanked with hydrogen atoms. When every carbon in the chain has a full load of hydrogen, the acid is said to be saturated. When two adjacent carbon atoms in the chain are each lacking a hydrogen atom, the acid is mono-unsaturated, and when there are several such pairs, the acid is polyunsaturated.

The consumption of most saturated fats raises the level of cholesterol in the blood, which, in turn, increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated fats do not have this effect. But no fats that we actually eat fall neatly into one of these categories—all of them are composed of a mixture of saturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids, and some contain mono-unsaturates as well.

For example, popular belief has it that animal fat is heavily saturated, while vegetable oils are rich in polyunsaturates. But in fact beef tallow (fat) and lard contain almost as much mono-unsaturated as saturated fat, and palm and coconut oils are the purest known sources of saturated fat. The heart-conscious would be better off putting heavy cream in their coffee than nondairy creamer, which is usually made from coconut oil. And any vegetable fat that is chemically hydrogenated to make it solid or to keep it from becoming rancid—such as margarine, most peanut butters or cooking fats like Crisco and Spry—

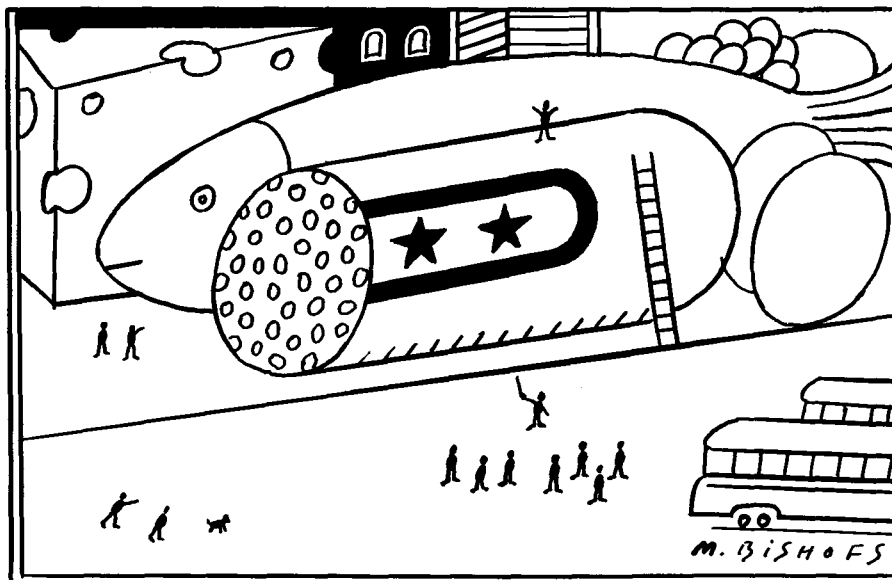
s also saturated. You can generally tell how saturated a fat is by how solid it remains at room temperature. For example, corn oil is less saturated than tub margarine, which is less saturated than stick margarine. However, not every saturated fat is bad for the heart. Cocoa butter is hard at room temperature, but it is largely made up of stearic acid, a fatty acid that is not well absorbed by the body and does not significantly raise blood cholesterol.

Cholesterol is not a fat at all but an alcohol that has little in common with dietary fats except insolubility in water. Virtually every animal cell, including human cells, contains cholesterol, which is vital to the manufacture of cell membranes, sex and adrenal hormones, liver bile, and the covering of nerve cells. No one over the age of six months needs to eat other animals or drink milk to get cholesterol—a healthy liver churns out enough, about 800 milligrams a day, to cover any contingency. But the additional 500 to 600 milligrams of cholesterol we eat daily, while unnecessary, does not appear in most cases to raise the blood- (or serum-) cholesterol level. This is why veal, seafood, and skinless chicken, which are moderately high in cholesterol but relatively low in saturated fat, are recommended as substitutes for red meat to people who are at risk for heart disease. Eggs, an excellent source of cheap protein, are low in saturated fat and calories, although high in cholesterol. (Cholesterol is rich in calories, but the body cannot use them as an energy source.) Studies have shown that eating as many as six eggs at a sitting does not significantly elevate blood-cholesterol levels in normal subjects who eat no saturated fat with the meal. There is some evidence, though by no means a consensus, that dietary cholesterol might increase the power of saturated fats to raise blood-cholesterol levels. And it is certain that saturated fats increase the power of cholesterol to raise blood cholesterol. Restricting saturated fat when eating high-cholesterol foods, then, is probably a good bet for those who have reason to be concerned about their blood-cholesterol levels. That means eating eggs on dry toast rather than on steak, skipping bacon and sausage, and cooking eggs in a non-stick frying pan or in polyunsaturated fat rather than in butter. Omega-3, a family of highly unsaturated fatty acids found most commonly in fish fat, has recently been touted as a preventive of heart disease. Makers of

fish-oil supplements and representatives of fishing-industry concerns point to studies showing that Greenland Eskimos, who consume enormous quantities of fatty marine animals, have very low levels of heart disease. But what is rarely mentioned is that the Eskimos studied had a very high incidence of stroke, alcoholism, and other disorders that gave them, on average, a life-span that ended before prime heart-attack age. They also led strenuous lives; exercise increases the level of high-density lipoproteins, or HDLs, which carry cholesterol out of the arteries. And, although they consumed plenty of cholesterol, they ate relatively little saturated fat. Fish oil itself has almost no effect on blood-cholesterol levels. It may, theoretically, reduce heart-attack risk by interfering

not raise it. And polyunsaturated fats may have their own drawbacks. Most are rich in linoleic acid, which has been shown to alter blood pressure. Consuming large amounts of linoleic acid also increases the incidence of cancer in laboratory animals. It is not clear whether people who consume large amounts of polyunsaturated fat are at increased risk for cancer, and there is no evidence that the balance between polyunsaturated and saturated fats in the diet has a direct effect on life expectancy.

The good news is that mono-unsaturated fats do not provoke tumors in animals or heart attacks in human beings. The bad news is that not many foods are high in mono-unsaturates. The main sources are olive oil, almond oil, and avocado oil. Replacing saturated fats



with blood clotting (Greenland Eskimos have thinner blood than the rest of us), but this theory is unproved. At any rate, a similar blood-thinning effect can be had by eating half an aspirin.

Substituting fish for red meat or cheese might still be a good idea, because it will reduce one's intake of saturated fat. But since much of the fish sold in this country is taken from polluted waters, eating fatty fish could be risky. Most carcinogens and other pollutants are fat-soluble, and concentrate in the liver and in body fat. Some nutritionists recommend that fish not be eaten more than twice a week, especially by children, and that fish-oil capsules be avoided.

Polyunsaturated fats are also widely advertised as lowering blood cholesterol, but they do not. They simply do

with any of these would reduce the risk of heart disease without increasing the risk of cancer, but so would replacing them with starch or protein.

Although mono-unsaturated oils seem to pose the lowest risk, an ideal diet for a healthy person would include a small quantity of fat from each of the three categories. Naturally, for those with a history of heart disease, saturated fats should be kept to a minimum. Likewise, if cancer runs in the family, polyunsaturated fats should be minimized. The best overall strategy for everyone, though, is to minimize the total amount of fat in the diet. All things being as equal as they can be—which is not very, when it comes to diet—people who consume fewer fat calories of any sort appear to live longer and healthier lives. □

MUSIC

LARGE-SCALE JAZZ

The action today is in composing, not improvising

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

JAZZ SCRIPTURE insists that composition is a frill, at best a springboard to improvisation and at worst an obstruction to it. But jazz scripture also insists on progress, and in the past few years improvisers have been retracing their steps and composers have been the ones breaking new ground—writing formally ambitious works that, while not eschewing improvisation altogether, relegate it to second place and demand more rigorous self-editing by improvising soloists. Many of these composers are rejecting jazz's traditional isolationism to collaborate with poets, choreographers, and classical musicians. *X*, the Anthony Davis opera about the life of Malcolm X, presented by the New York City Opera last fall, is unique only in that it got funded—there could be other *X*s waiting to happen, by Ornette Coleman, Abdullah Ibrahim, and Henry Threadgill, all of whom have described plans for grand initiatives. Other contemporary composers who are thinking big—if only in terms of thinking orchestrally, even when they are able to hire just six or seven players—include Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, John Carter, Joseph Jarman, Leroy Jenkins, Steve Lacy, Roscoe Mitchell, Butch Morris, James Newton, Errol Parker, George Russell, Leo Smith, Cecil Taylor, Edward Wilkerson, the members of the World Saxophone Quartet (Hamiet Bluiett, Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, and David Murray), and the String Trio of New York (Billy Bang, James Emery, and John Lindberg). But if one accepts the premise that composition is the key element in jazz in the 1980s, the decade's central figure is not any of these but Duke Ellington, who died in 1974.

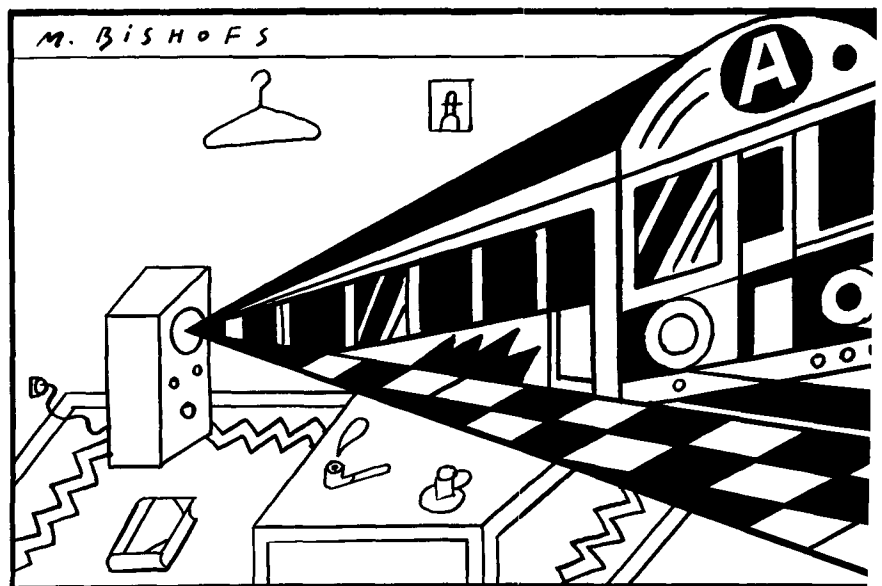
Ellington's influence has never been greater. Typed as a "jazz" composer only by circumstance of race, he spent his career chafing at the restrictions of jazz, much as his spiritual descendants are chafing now. His scope was enormous. In addition to ballads even shapelier and riffs even more propulsive than those ex-

pected of a swing-era big-band leader, his portfolio included tone poems, ballet suites, concerto-like miniatures for star sidemen, sacred music, topical revues, film scores, and extended jazz works unparalleled until very recently and classifiable only as modern American music. He even wrote a comic opera: *Queenie Pie*, the trifling but winsome score he was working on for public television at his death, was finally staged last fall in Philadelphia and Washington. The son of working people, who dared to imagine himself in top hat and tails, an experimentalist who courted and won popular acceptance, Ellington was one of America's greatest composers, regardless of idiom. He was also the most quintessentially American, in the way that he effortlessly negotiated the distance between popular culture and the fine arts, the dance floor and the concert hall.

IN 1984 THE JAZZ critic Gary Giddins estimated that fifty hours of Ellington recordings had been released in the ten years following his death. More have been released since then, including long-forgotten studio sessions and con-

cert tapes previously circulated only among private collectors. Invaluable as much of this material has proved to be, it is ironic that it has generally been easier to come by than Ellington's most acclaimed work—the epochal sides he recorded for RCA Victor in the early 1940s, for years available only on French import or by mail order from the Smithsonian Institution.

The release of *Duke Ellington: The Blanton-Webster Band* (RCA Bluebird 5659-1-RB29, also available on cassette and compact disc) late last year indicates that RCA is finally beginning to realize what treasures lie in its vaults. The four record set collects the Ellington Orchestra's entire commercially recorded output from March of 1940 to July of 1942—arguably Ellington's most fertile period, though most of his large-scale works, beginning with *Black, Brown, and Beige*, were still to come. By 1942 most of Ellington's sidemen had been with him a decade or more, and he had been so important in shaping their sensibilities that he could almost predict the content of their improvisations. This familiarity enabled him to take daredevil risks as a composer and arranger. The two newcomers alluded to in the collection's title perhaps stimulated him even more. The bassist Jimmy Blanton, the first jazz virtuoso on his instrument, gave the orchestra's syncopations more bite, and opened Ellington up as a pianist. The arrival of Ben Webster, the orchestra's first tenor-saxophone star, gave Ellington another crack soloist to call on as well as another color for his palette (He acquired still another, more exotic one in late 1940, when Ray Nance, w-



doubled on violin, joined the trumpet section.)

The detail of Ellington's writing and the individuality of his soloists are always astonishing, no matter how many times one has heard the tracks on *The Blanton-Webster Band*. "Concerto for Cootie," with its beautifully integrated theme and improvisational variations by the trumpeter Cootie Williams, is a masterpiece. In "Jack the Bear" the dialogues between Blanton and the ensemble are thrilling. "Ko-Ko" offers intimations of modality and minimalism. The delight of "Cotton Tail" lies in its breakneck Webster choruses and intricate sax-section harmonizations. And the layered countermelody of "I've Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" shows off the inspired conjugation of Johnny Hodges's alto and Ivie Anderson's voice (as perfect a union as that between Lester Young and Billie Holiday). "Main Stem" and "Harlem Air Shaft" are among the racks that show Ellington's ability to experiment even within the confines of the blues and the thirty-two-bar song format. The numerous versions of pop hits of the period show Ellington's powers of transformation, and Herb Jeffries's ungainly warbling proves that even Ellington was human (with the exception of Ivie Anderson, he never employed a first-rate singer on a regular basis). This was also the period in which Billy Strayhorn, Ellington's protégé, blossomed into an influential composer and orchestrator under his mentor's watchful eye. Strayhorn's "Raincheck" and "Johnny Come Lately" anticipate bebop phraseology, and his "Take the 'A' Train," which ultimately became the Ellington Orchestra's signature tune, cleverly underlines the band's playful swank. But the most evocative Strayhorn piece here is "Chelsea Bridge," with its lordly Webster solo; as a successful jazz appropriation of Ravel and Debussy, this remains unsurpassed even by Ellington, a master impressionist in his own right.

It is too bad that the producers of *The Blanton-Webster Band* failed to include Ellington's 1941 duets with Blanton, or the small-group dates from the same period led by Hodges, the clarinetist Barney Bigard, and the trumpeter Rex Stewart, all featuring Ellington on piano. If it is true, as Strayhorn is said to have put it, that Ellington's real instrument was the orchestra, it is equally true that the piano became an orchestra at his urging. (*Money Jungle*, on Blue Note T-85129, a bristling encounter with

the modernists Charles Mingus and Max Roach, recorded in 1962 and reissued last year with other material, provides a good long look at Ellington the dissonant stride pianist.) Although the vintage performances on *The Blanton-Webster Band* have been digitally remastered, the sound is not as vivid as on the French reissues, nor is the pitch as accurate. If RCA finally intends to do justice to its Ellington catalogue, its job is far from over—the Ellington Orchestra recorded masterpieces for the label before 1940 and after 1942. *The Blanton-Webster Band* is a godsend for those on a tight budget; others are advised to search the specialty shops for French RCA's increasingly difficult-to-find *Works of Duke*, twenty-four volumes available separately or in five boxed sets. Still, music that is timeless and universal in its appeal belongs in chain stores as well as specialty shops, which is why the reappearance of this material on a well-distributed domestic label is so welcome.

In the years since Ellington's death, iconoclastic performers associated with the jazz avant-garde have recorded albums of his compositions. They have brought their own agendas to his music, which has proved more malleable than anyone might have imagined (although there is some justice in the complaints of those who insist that to play Ellington means playing him his way). The most striking of these revisionist homages are the flutist James Newton's *African Flower* (Blue Note BT-85109), the pianist Ran Blake's *Duke Dreams* (Soul Note SN-1027, distributed by Polygram Special Imports), and the World Saxophone Quartet's *World Saxophone Quartet Plays Duke Ellington* (Nonesuch 79137-1). This album is both the most recent and the most satisfying in terms of fealty to Ellington's tempos and the ineluctable *rightness* of its deviations from text.

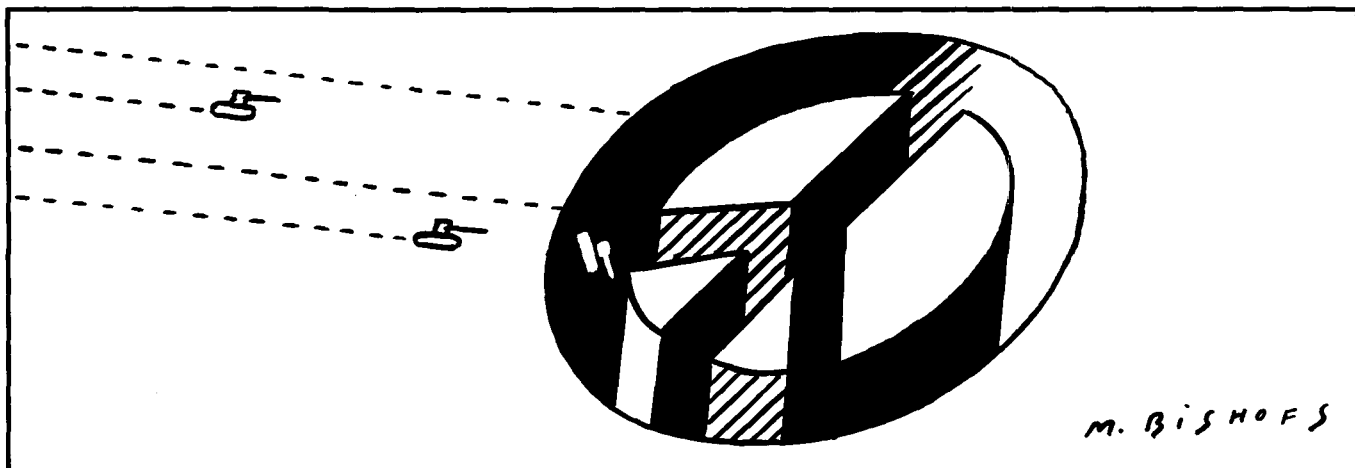
THAT SO MANY performers who are generally adamant about playing only their own material have chosen to interpret Ellington is eloquent testimony to his inexhaustible influence, as are the Ellingtonian flourishes (sometimes filtered through his disciple Charles Mingus) that pervade the ensembles of John Carter, Abdullah Ibrahim, David Murray, and Henry Threadgill. But when I call Ellington the key figure of the decade, it's not just because musicians continue to play his tunes or to aspire to his orchestral majesty. Musicians

from all stylistic camps have long done that much, and Mercer Ellington has done an admirable job of keeping his father's music in circulation, on albums like the new *Digital Duke* (GR-1038). Nor is it just because the plungered, speech-like brass styles like the ones that Bubber Miley, Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, and Joe Nanton patented during their years with Ellington are again all the rage, thanks to the trombonist Craig Harris and the trumpeters Lester Bowie and Olu Dara. Nor is it because Anthony Davis and many other black composers are consciously, and in some instances programmatically, giving musical expression to the goals and frustrations of black society, just as Ellington did with such mural-like works as *Harlem*, *The Deep South Suite*, and *Black, Brown, and Beige*.

What is most significant is that today's visionary jazz composers are taking up Ellington's unfinished task of integrating composition and improvisation. Jazz is thought of as extemporaneous and fleeting—that is another part of its romance—but these composers, in setting pen to paper, are aiming for a perpetuity like that which Ellington achieved. They are realizing larger works, as he did, and not worrying whether the results strike everyone as jazz.

Of course, not everyone who listens to jazz is as sanguine about this development as I am. Some fear that jazz is recklessly heading for the same dead end that classical music arrived at earlier in this century, with atonality and serialism. And it is true that the composers I am speaking of as Ellington's heirs lack his common touch, his willingness to play the role of entertainer, and will probably never find themselves in a position to develop this commendable trait. Jazz has experienced growing pains since Ellington's time, and the innocent idea of entertainment has been forced to submit to the cynical science of demographics (it's a question not of what is entertaining but of how many and whom it entertains). In its maturity—some would say its dotage—jazz has become an art music, and because a reconciliation with pop seems out of the question, a rapprochement with classical music is probably the key to its survival. Ellington gives these contemporary composers much to strive for, but his mass appeal is sadly out of their reach. A larger audience should be part of what a composer dares to hope for when he starts thinking big. □

BOOKS



THE GENTLE HEROES

BY THOMAS POWERS

TRoublesome PEOPLE:
The Warriors of Pacifism
by Caroline Moorehead.
Adler & Adler, \$19.95.

IF HISTORY IS what gets into books, then pacifism hasn't got much of a history. The shelves of libraries groan with the history of wars—who fought them and why, how they were run, why the battles turned out the way they did, occasionally even what it was like to live through one as a common soldier, despised and shot at and pensioned off on a pittance at the end. But the flood of books on war—at once the curse and the central business of the nation-state—narrows to a trickle when it comes to the dangerous commitment of the lonely, frightened few who have refused to fight. Caroline Moorehead's fine, brisk history of pacifism in the twentieth century rescues a few of those few from oblivion. What they have to say is interesting enough, but talk was never their strong suit. It is what they did that instructs.

Conscript armies are as old as history, but it was not until the past century or two that men who read books were commonly drafted to fight. It is one thing to refuse any part in war when no one insists, quite another when the call-up notice has arrived. In 1916 conscription came to Britain, the birthplace of modern pacifism and the last of the belligerents in the First World War to abandon

the volunteer army. What followed makes up the longest and best part of Moorehead's book. The Asquith Government's conscription bill, which passed the House of Commons by a lopsided 383–36 vote typical of wartime, established local tribunals to decide who might qualify for an exemption “on the grounds of a conscientious objection to bearing arms” without further defining just when an objection might be “conscientious” or what constituted “bearing arms.” The tribunals were free to take a narrow view. “Do you ever wash yourself?” a member of one of them asked. “You don't look as if you do. Yours is a case of an unhealthy mind in an unwholesome body.” Rejection of one's case meant a painful choice between submission and jail. About 16,000 “conchies”—as they were soon called—requested exemption by war's end. Some 6,300 were arrested when they refused to accept a tribunal's ruling; over 5,900 were court-martialed; 819 spent more than two years in jail, and 69 died there.

The harshest treatment was reserved for the “absolute refusers,” for whom “bearing arms” included literally everything associated with the whole enterprise of war. Their refusal to explain themselves, to accept alternative service, to wear a uniform, to salute officers, to march when ordered, infuriated the authorities. “[For] that kind of man,” Lloyd George said in mid-1916, “I, personally, have absolutely no sympathy whatsoever. . . . I shall only consider the best means of making the path of that class as hard as possible.” In practice this meant induction, court-martial, prison, release, re-induction, and so on. The cat-and-mouse approach ended

only with the war; 521 men were court-martialed three times, 50 five times, and 3 six times. The last of the prisoners was released in 1923. Few broke under the harsh regimes in prisons with names like Wormwood Scrubs, Pentonville, and Dartmoor, and the stubborn refusal of objectors brought out the worst in their guards. Men were beaten, half-starved, left naked in dark, damp cells. The sixty-nine who died were not murdered in the usual sense, just mistreated to death which suggests that the captivity of the survivors must often have been harsh as well. Cynics might note that the casualty rate of pacifists was unusually low—only a few score dead of the thousand jailed. Survival was part of their ordeal. The official treatment of pacifists during the First World War is not a pretty page in British history, but nothing described by Moorehead can match the scenes of Gothic horror in *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes's brilliant history of Australia's first half-century as a British penal colony. Evidently some education of the official heart had taken place by the time pacifists challenged the blind British determination to run Edwardian society aground on the great barrier reef of the war in France.

What resulted from the pacifists' long struggle against Europe's greatest kill-or-kill spree? Certainly the British war effort did not suffer. Of the millions who volunteered or were called up after conscription, about 750,000 died. Talk of negotiated settlement to the war got nowhere, and it was fought to bitter victory. Beyond their own narrow circles pacifists were commonly ostracized as shirkers and cowards. But things began to look very different within a few years

f the war's end, and by the early 1930s the pacifists' example bore fruit in the notorious resolution of the Oxford Union "in no circumstances [to] fight for King and Country." Widespread peace activism—not quite the same thing as pacifism—survived the rise of Hitler and the Spanish Civil War but evaporated, predictably, with the onset of the Second World War, in 1939. This time round, British officials had to deal with 40,000 requests for exemption on conscientious grounds, but the bureaucratic machinery handled them easily and Moorehead has no horror stories to relate of the 1940s.

IT IS ONE OF the strengths of Moorehead's book that she attends to what pacifists do best—instruction by example—and mostly lets theory alone. Pacifism is a response to the problem of war and in theory offers a solution. Any discussion of the subject quickly reaches the central argument—What do we do about threats of imminent violence? It's good question. The normally temperate George Orwell dismissed pacifists as "fascist gang" for refusing to fight Hitler, who dealt with his own by executing 1,000 of them. Early in the war Gandhi urged the Jews to resist Hitler with "the active non-violent resistance of the Cong." Would that have worked better than the mostly passive acquiescence of European Jews, who wore the yellow star and gathered themselves at railroad stations for deportation to the death camps? Very likely it would have, but it's hard to see why the modern state of Israel has chosen a different path.

The question is a live one today, in a militarized world that spends a trillion dollars a year on arms. Active non-violent resistance might hold out some promise for the blacks of South Africa, but does it make sense for the Sandinistas against the contras, or the Afghans trying to expel the Russians? Non-violent resistance seems to work best against authorities already in power, as it worked in India or works today—better than armed alternatives, at least—in Poland. But what about threats to impose control—in short, war? When war comes, it leaves little room for choice—neither fights back or submits to the aims and whims of the victor. This is a hard question for pacifism, but not for pacifists. The American pacifist Max Yergin was once asked, "If a man was holding a knife at your mother's throat, what would you do?" He answered, "I

can't tell you what I'd do. I can only tell you what I've done."

Moorehead seems to like this answer. Pacifism can never refute the arguments of the generals; it can only suggest that there is another way. In the 1960s and early 1970s American pacifism—not the rigorous Quaker kind, but a broad, unruly, thoroughly emotional resistance to going on with war—got the United States out of Vietnam. Since then it has turned its attention to nuclear weapons and war in Central America. Moorehead's chapter on peace activism in the United States serves as a quick introduction to the major groups and the thinking of their leaders, but fails to convey the range of what they're up to. A richer portrait of the American peace movement can be found in Paul Rogat Loeb's *Hope in Hard Times*, an eloquent book, told mostly through personal histories, which suggests that one of the principal worries on the American mind in the evening of the twentieth century is the danger of nuclear war. What else comes close? To keep track of what people are doing about it, you might subscribe to the monthly newsletter *Peacework* (\$7 a year from the American Friends Service Committee, 2161 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02140). In the back of each issue is a list of several score events—lectures, demonstrations, petition-signings, fund-raisers, and the like—that have something, albeit often tangential, to do with "peace." You might ask of any of them, as it is routinely asked of pacifism, whether *this*, even given the benefit of every reasonable doubt, can solve the problem of war. The answer would of course be no. Peace activism is what people do when they don't know what else to do.

THE BRITISH historian Arnold Toynbee was spared the fate of his generation on the battlefields of France by the accident of a case of dysentery. In a volume of memoirs, *Experiences*, he remarked again and again that "half" his schoolmates died in the Great War. Doubtless he exaggerated. The amazing fact is not that 16,000 Britons refused conscription but that millions accepted. It was not the Germans who killed so many of them, in Toynbee's view, but war itself, which he called a Moloch, after the child-eating god of the Canaanites. By the end of his life he frankly feared that a Moloch armed with nuclear weapons would climax the crescendo movement of the two great wars of his lifetime.

Also available from The Atlantic Bookstore, page 83.

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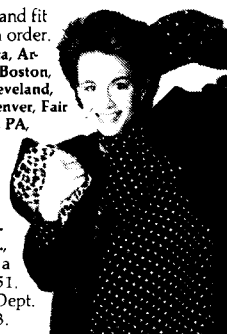
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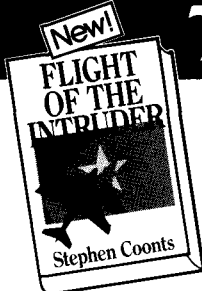
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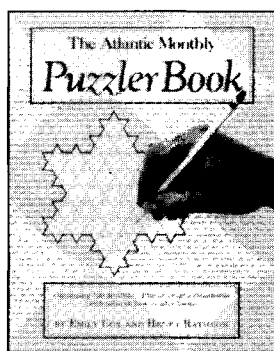
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Also available from The Atlantic Bookstore, page 83.

Fear of nuclear war is what principally animates pacifists now. The cost of protest can still be high. Two American peace activists, Carl Kabat and Helen Woodson, are currently serving prison sentences of eighteen and twelve years, respectively, for a 1984 protest in which they attacked the concrete hatch cover of a Minuteman missile silo with a rented jackhammer. The damage was trivial, but the two activists were convicted of sabotage and aroused the judge's ire when they refused to promise not to try again. From one perspective, the protest was foolish: what difference could a single missile make, more or less? But Kabat and Woodson thought the point was worth making anyway. Is anybody listening? That's hard to say. Activists have helped to put arms control near the top of the American political agenda, and to a large extent are responsible for congressional resistance to President Reagan's policy of armed confrontation with the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. These are not negligible achievements. It's probably fair to say that pacifism in its broad form, as Moorehead describes it, is making progress in the world, but war is making progress too. The Soviet and American nuclear arsenals, lavishly attended, grow ever more accurate and versatile. Shooting wars in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf could spill over their present boundaries at any moment. No one "wants" war, perhaps, but war is infinitely patient, and does not care what we want. □

CAN WE STILL HEAR TOCQUEVILLE?

BY SHELDON WOLIN

THE STRANGE LIBERALISM OF
ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE
by Roger Boesche.
Cornell University Press, \$29.95.

THE BICENTENARY of the American Constitution is an embarrassing reminder that over the centuries only two acknowledged classics of political theory about "the world's oldest democracy" have appeared. One is *The Federalist*, the other Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Neither was the work of an American citizen. The first was written before the Constitution had been ratified by all

the states and hence before the category of American national citizenship was invented. The second was composed by a Frenchman for French readers.

These two classics have been established as the authoritative texts for the understanding of a constitutional republic—that is, of a political system that incorporates democratic forms while restricting popular power. Along with the Constitution they have formed a curriculum that has given several generations of Americans a political education with distrust of direct democracy at its core. Accordingly, the official celebration of the bicentennial of *The Federalist* and the Constitution and the recent sesquicentennial of Tocqueville's *Democracy* are celebration not so much of democracy but of its attenuation. In fact, although all three works were about limiting majority rule, only *Democracy* was for encouraging popular participation.

Tocqueville's ideas do not, indeed sit comfortably within the canon. Although not a disturbing writer like, say, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, or Foucault, he remains a remarkably perceptive one, possibly because he was the quintessential Fox, the thinker who sees many different things, often from unexpected angles. But he was also an uncharacteristic Fox, who sought always for the larger panorama, whether in his great narrative about how the Old Republic had worked to destroy itself before the revolution of 1789, or in the first epic of America, which marveled at the contrasts in a land where the "power of material prosperity over political behavior, and even over opinions too" was unprecedented, and yet "it is impossible to prevent men assembling, getting excited together, and forming sudden passionate resolves." His genius was the moral seriousness that he brought to politics. He was possibly the last great modern writer to believe passionately in the dignity and intrinsic value of political life.

Unfortunately, Tocqueville's *Democracy* has become a kind of civics manual for oligarchic rule with a democratic face, which it unifies and soothes by demonstrating that political success is the result of the high-mindedness of a few and the moderation of the many. Oligarchs have favored Tocqueville because of his basic presupposition that the best democracy will produce mediocrity rather than excellence, "less glory, less wretchedness," "pleasures less extreme, but well-being more general."

eral," fewer great intellectual achievements but less "ignorance," and "more vices and fewer crimes." Oligarchs like the idea of a mediocre democracy because they can then assume the garb of "elites" and pose as the defenders of excellence. They can, as well, savor a moderate pessimism that does not demand radical change but allows them to deplore big government and the decline of participation, the excessive greed, the destruction of nature, the corruption of Indians, and the enslavement of blacks that are deplored by Tocqueville—and yet not recognize that there is anything profoundly problematic about the "experiment" so long as morality tames the "habits of the heart." Many commentators have expressed the oligarchic consensus about Tocqueville by professing to find the "real" puzzle in his remark that he was a "liberal of a new kind." This provides the occasion for a sharp (but hardly pointed) dispute over whether Tocqueville was a "conservative liberal" or a "liberal conservative"—which is a reasonable facsimile of what passes for soul-searching among American political intellectuals today.

IN THE STRANGE *Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Roger Boesche gives his answer by exploring Tocqueville's ideas in relation to the categories of liberal and conservative as these emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the title of his workmanlike study suggests, he finds deep ambivalences and concludes that Tocqueville was ideologically unclassifiable and thus that there is need for a new category—"strange liberalism." Boesche takes the strangeness of Tocqueville's liberalism to mean the coexistence within it of liberal and non-liberal elements. While Tocqueville believed in the liberal commonplaces of his time—individual rights and legal protection, constitutional restraints on state power, the sanctity of property, the horror of socialism, and the blessings of liberty—he also despised the bourgeoisie, lamented the ill effects of commerce on political life, worried about the declining influence of religion in politics, emphasized the importance of tradition, extolled an occasional dose of warfare as a tonic for flabby times, distasted a society based on individualism, and deplored a politics dominated by self-interest. Some of these non-liberal elements Boesche attributes to Tocqueville's aristocratic genealogy; other elements, such as Tocqueville's advocacy of

political participation, he ascribes to a combination of Rousseau's influence and the example of New England town meetings.

Boesche wants to establish Tocqueville less as the theorist of American democracy than as a thinker shaped primarily by the concerns he shared with a roughly contemporary Romantic generation of literary figures such as Chateaubriand, Stendhal, Balzac, Musset, and Baudelaire. Their common concerns were loneliness, anxiety, homelessness, powerlessness, hostility toward the culture of the bourgeoisie and contempt for its political aptitude, and a longing for heroes. Boesche contends that Tocqueville's conception of freedom occupied the center of his vision of politics and represented his hope for an alternative to what he perceived as the two dominant political tendencies of the day. One was centripetal, toward the subordination of political and social life to a state-centered administration. The other was centrifugal, represented by the self-centered individualism that capitalism had spawned. While these tendencies seemed to be opposites, they were actually interdependent. Tocqueville feared that the two together might amount to a new despotism: in return for legitimating the acquisitiveness of the bourgeoisie the state would become an apolitical society of "self-seekers practicing a narrow individualism and caring nothing for the public good." Contrary to what some readers have thought, Tocqueville associated despotism not with tyranny of the majority but with bourgeois greed and self-interest.

As Boesche skillfully shows, Tocqueville thought that by drawing men away from public concerns, a commercial society deepens the peculiarly modern malaise of a profound sense of individual helplessness in the face of tremendous social forces. Individuals are then ready to surrender an active political life in exchange for an administrative Leviathan that promises benevolent protection. Modern despotism would depend less on coercion by a master than on withdrawal by the citizens. Tocqueville's alternative was participatory politics based on voluntary associations and local institutions. The practice of self-government, he reasoned, would draw individuals from the cocoon of private interests, sensitize them to common concerns, and form a new civic consciousness synthesizing the public and the private good.

Boesche's work is a model of fair-

mindedness, and his analysis of Tocquevillean despotism is a distinct contribution. Unfortunately, certain methodological scruples inhibit the book and cause it to trail off uncertainly. Boesche promises us a Tocqueville who is "exciting and full of insight," "an enticing and original thinker" who lets us "see our own world anew, with fresh eyes." Then he takes it back, however, warning that while Tocqueville "speaks to us and to our problems," he does not speak "with our language." The language that Tocqueville does speak, according to Boesche, is that of French Romantic literature. His ideas are inevitably tied, therefore, to "the anxieties and aspirations of his own generation." In accepting as dogma the intellectual historian's insistence upon riveting ideas to their historical context, Boesche produces an implicit determinism that reduces ideas to being functions of their contexts. What is lost is Tocqueville's theory. In its place are particular disconnected ideas that, when juxtaposed, seem unoriginal and "strange." The promised connection between Tocqueville's ideas and our world is never forged.

TOCQUEVILLE'S CENTRAL and abiding preoccupation was revolution. Like many persons of his age and especially of his class, he found the great revolution of 1789 at once traumatic and epic. It had cleft the world into two worlds: one past, the other present; one based on tradition, hierarchy, privilege, and inherited inequality, the other aspiring to rational politics, formal political equality, social meritocracy, and economic freedom. The death and transfiguration of the Old World he traced in his later masterpiece, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. The creation of the New World was the major theme of *Democracy in America*. Both works are tense with ambivalence, for despite his protestations Tocqueville was determined to retrieve something of value from the Old World. As his mentor, the famous historian Guizot, told him, "You judge 'democracy' like an aristocrat who has been vanquished, and is convinced that his conqueror is right."

Others before Tocqueville had described American political institutions and commented upon the manners of America's citizens. What he did was to see in America the embodiment of the modern longing for a fresh beginning and a fair start for all amid infinite possi-

bilities. He was the first to wrestle with the spectacle of a "new" society, the first to deal connectedly with the extraordinary size and natural wealth of America, with its seemingly endless land and open space, its individualism and loneliness, its disdain for authority but deference to majority opinion, its egalitarian social conditions and new aristocracy of industrialists ("one of the hardest that have appeared"), its republican legalism and democratic politics, its restless mobility and stable morality, and its reckless experimentation and love of novelty coupled with a deference to rigid political and religious notions transported from the Old World.

But he went further. "I admit," he wrote, "that I saw in America more than America; it was the shape of democracy

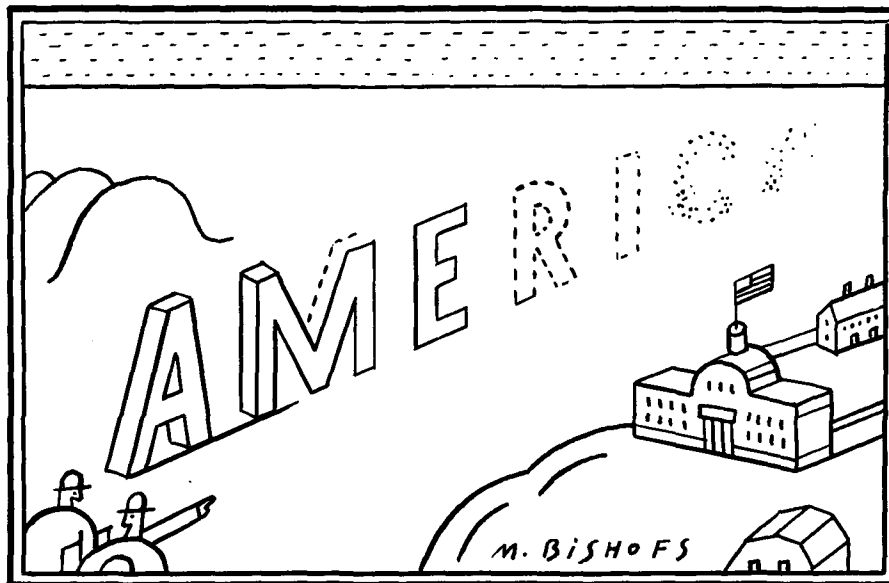
anachronism, as an irrational force that threatens national decision-making, Tocqueville associated democracy with the new and modern, the wave of the future; it was "providential fact." Tocqueville reasoned that America was, like France, the creature of modern revolution; but unlike France, whose path to modernity was through the rejection of its feudal past, America had no ancien regime to destroy, only free institutions to preserve. France's course had produced recurrent instability and two Bonapartist dictatorships. Thus feudalism seemed to be a natural barrier to despotism, and America seemed somehow to have hit on the formula. And so Tocqueville's quest was for the "feudal" principles and practices that had saved the New World from its populist self. His task be-

avored a strong central administration, which would treat everyone uniformly. But America was rescued from the consequences of modern egalitarianism by the pre-modern practices of local self-government and communal self-help, as well as by the ingrained respect accorded to an unofficial aristocracy of lawyers and judges. Above all, America was profoundly lucky in not having the most crucial agent of modernization, a centralized state.

While political theory had traditionally treated democracy as a form of political power organized by and for the interests of the demos, Tocqueville adopted essentially conservative categories, many of them derived from Montesquieu, Burke, and the anti-liberal strain in Rousseau, and used them to redefine democracy to mean a political culture. Political culture stood for something deeper, more truly constitutive than formal political arrangements; it was what made institutions succeed or fail. The deep culture of American democracy consisted of social habits; religious, political, and moral beliefs; traditions of self-government; property rights; and customary institutions. All worked to modify and constrain the modernizing tendencies of democracy. By developing a self-repressive version of democracy America had rendered democracy safe for the world.

Thus America was the freest and most fickle society that had ever existed: men could roam to the point of exhaustion without meeting another soul. Similarly they could rapidly move up or down the social scale and yet not establish any durable or inherited social privileges or status. The impulse toward change was also marked among American legislators: laws were revised at a rate that staggered Europeans. Everything America seemed limitless, a symbol of infinity: its space, its resources, its energy, its possibilities, its freedom. But Tocqueville insisted, change was most confined to superficial matters, for "while the law allows the American people to do everything, there are things which religion prevents them from imagining and forbids them to dare."

AN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN writer once asked, "What is Athens to Jerusalem?" We might ask, What is Tocqueville's beloved New England today meeting to Wall Street in the 1980s? The obvious reply is, Not much. If Tocqueville does not speak the contemporary



itself which I sought, its inclinations, character, prejudices, and passions. . . ." America was the setting where the dangers and possibilities of modern politics could be most clearly seen. Tocqueville saw in America the political project of the modern unbound self, freed from the inhibitions of tradition, inherited status, and social hierarchies and dominated by "its own inclinations with hardly any restraint on its instincts. . . ."

If, to use a later vocabulary, America seemed to be all id but flourishing nonetheless, where was superego? What combination of elements had prevented America from realizing the fate that properly belonged to libidinous democracy? How had America tamed democracy while in part realizing it?

In contrast to the smart set in today's America, who portray democracy as an

came to contain the future, to modify democracy's natural tendency toward egalitarian resentment tempered by incompetence. This produced a rhetorical strategy of appealing from the modern to the pre-modern, from a democratic world struggling to be born to, we might say, an aristocratic pre-modern world struggling to die. The quest produced a text that was as much a political critique of modernity as it was of democracy.

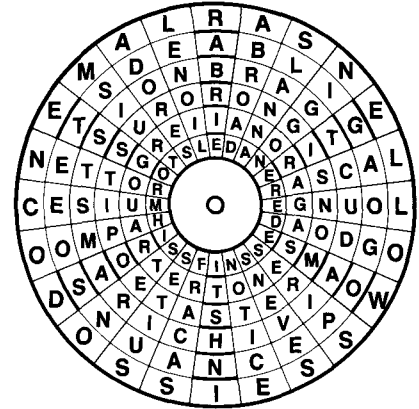
The first step in Tocqueville's strategy was to analyze America not as the fulfillment of a revolutionary ideology but as a blend that included counter-revolutionary ingredients. Thus local self-government was portrayed as a counterweight to democracy; it had existed in the colonies before egalitarianism appeared. Egalitarianism, in turn, represented a leveling urge that naturally fa-

Answers to the July Puzzles

"THE MUSIC GOES ROUND AND ROUND"

The song title is "Frère Jacques."

The Music. a. FLAME-N-CO b. DO-SS-TERS (rise anag.) c. S(WOL)LEN (Len's anag. + low rev.) d. SEARED (anag.) e. STERE(O)S f. NU(de)-(d)ANCE(r) g. POGO (hidden periph.) h. (fr)AGILE i. BAN-JOISTS j. MAR-I(A-CH)I k. VIADUCT (anag.) l. GARB-O (rev.) m. RUST-I-C n. POETASTER (anag.) o. MON-SIGNORI (anag.) p. ERGO (hidden) q. QUARTE(R) T-ON-E r. SAG(U)AR-O (o ragas rev.) s. NAIL (anag.) t. STORM (anag. minus bone) u. HIS-S v. F-IN-ESSED (seeds anag.) w. SERENADE (anag.) Six-Letter Words. 1. LI(ONE)L 2. A(DO-RE)-S 3. TRUISM (anag.) 4. ROTTEN (anag.) 5. C(E)SIUM (anag. + E) 6. OOMP(A)H 7. STERN-O 8. SUITES (double def.) 9. F-(ma)RACAS 10. NOT(I-C)E 11. SE(V)-EN-S 12. S(P)IRES 13. OGDOD-D (anag. + d) 14. LO(UN)GE 15. RA(n)-SCAL(e) 16. N-OGGIN (n + anag.) 17. ANNA(L)'S 18. A-B-RO(A)D



ACROSTIC NO. 24

"You cannot mistake [hydrochloric acid] for anything else, because after having taken in one breath of it you expel from your nose two short plumes of white smoke, like the horses in Eisenstein's movies, and . . . your teeth turn sour in your mouth. . . ."

—Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table*

language, it is because our language is appropriate to an inverted democracy. For Tocqueville, democracy was the dominant ideology of a sovereign majority. Today it is an opiate prescribed by a minority for a citizenry imagined to be as nostalgic and depoliticized as the sudsy camaraderie of a beer commercial. Instead of being the dominant force of an engulfing modernity that can be restrained only by archaic practices and beliefs, democracy is itself the archaic element, wholly out of place in the high-tech world of corporate takeovers and golden parachutes. If democracy has declined from representing modernity to representing archaism, from sovereignty to sentimentality, the oligarchic element has shed its archaic character to become post-modern: it is now meritocratic, technocratic, and managerial. Post-modern order is beginning to resemble Tocqueville's vision of modern despotism: "an immense, protective power . . . fatherlike . . . [keeping all] in perpetual childhood . . . the citizens quit their state of dependence just long enough to choose their masters. . . ."

Tocqueville's image of a centralized and benevolent administration might mislead a contemporary reader into believing that the problem is the welfare state. It is in part that, but understood as social discipline rather than social welfare. What we are witnessing now in the panic over AIDS, drug abuse, teenage sex, and espionage is the reconstitution of society, or "private life," into an active agency of public power. The Reagan Administration's rhetoric about "voluntary agencies" is not about the Red Cross or church socials or spare kidneys, nor is the "privatization" of public services an attempt to decentralize political power. The neglect of public education and the encouragement of private schooling, the rise of the private health-care industry, and the growth of private law enforcement and the construction and administration of prisons for private profit amount to an overwhelming vote of confidence in the ability of the private sector to cooperate with the official state in accomplishing the ends of political power: providing services while extending control, and extracting the ingredients of power (natural and human resources) from a citizenry fearful of being marginalized by continuous technological innovation and international competition. Tocqueville does speak our language, but unfortunately it is getting more and more difficult to hear. □



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BRIEF REVIEWS



VAN WINKLE'S RETURN by Kenneth Wilson. University Press of New England, \$18.00 and \$10.95. The author begins by explaining that after sixteen years of teaching English, "I wandered off and fell asleep: I became a college dean and a university vice president." When he returned to his original field, Professor Wilson was much struck by the changes in the use of language which had occurred during his hibernation. Old taboos had disappeared, while new taboos had arisen. Old arguments had been forgotten, but new rows flourished. The author's reflections on these shifts of practice and emphasis are sensible and frequently witty, and his text is enlarged by footnotes designed to provoke the reader to grammatical debate.

MOSCOW 2042 by Vladimir Voinovich. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$16.95. Mr. Voinovich, the expatriate (naturally) Russian satirist, has stated that his ambition is "to herd all the sacred cows into a blind alley," and his latest move in that campaign is a maliciously disrespectful fantasy about the future of Russian communism. His hero, an expatriate (naturally) Russian critic and would-be social reformer, is offered a magical voyage to the Moscow of 2042, and takes it. There he finds all the old sacred cows, bigger and more useless than ever, and Mr. Voinovich belabors them with energy and ingenuity. He perhaps carries on his attack a little too long, for the novel's conclusion, and the reasons for it, become predictable early enough to arouse a mild impatience in the reader. Despite this in truth minor defect, the book is rewarding because of its wild logic and battle-ax humor.

MARY SHELLEY by Muriel Spark. Dutton, \$19.95. Ms. Spark's life of Mary Shelley is admirably concise, possibly because she assumes that the reader is already pretty well informed on the whole Shelley circle. The biographical material is followed by a discussion of Mary Shelley's literary career, which began in her teens with *Frankenstein* (a novel that today surely has more reputation than readers) and continued through her wid-

owhood because, while she was truly incapable of doing nothing, she also truly needed money. (Shelley's father was both unforgiving and stingy.) The success of *Frankenstein* was never repeated, although one other novel, *The Last Man*, had a similarly intellectual and prophetic theme. Ms. Spark concludes that "to a great extent Mary Shelley inherited an environment fifty years or more behind her time, and occupied one fifty years ahead of her." It is, on the evidence, a reasonable explanation of both the tenor and the limitations of her work.

WHO KILLED PALOMINO MOLERO? by Mario Vargas Llosa. Farrar Straus & Giroux, \$14.95. Mr. Llosa's tale about a pair of provincial cops trying to solve a murder case would be counted as a police-procedure novel if it were not set in Peru. There it becomes a bitter, blood-chilling demonstration of the impossibility of decent work or conduct under a corrupt, caste-ridden government.

ANDREW WYETH: The Helga Pictures by John Wilmerding. Abrams, \$40.00. Mr. Wilmerding correctly describes what he calls the Helga Suite as "a rich amalgam of several primary types of subject long treated in the development of American art—the portrait, nude model, landscape, and genre." Wyeth's Helga works range from quick experimental sketches to highly finished paintings, and show the subject awake and asleep, clothed and nude, indoors and out. Seen as a whole, the suite explains Wyeth's fifteen-year attention to this particular model, for her combination of delicate, fair coloring and severe, almost harsh features parallels the artist's preoccupation with the contrast between permanent solidity and ephemeral effect, which lurks throughout his work. Wyeth once called that undercurrent "witchcraft and hidden meaning," which is as good a way as any to account for the strange light he can throw on familiar landscapes.

AN AMERICAN VISION: Three Generations of Wyeth Art with essays by James H. Duff, Andrew Wyeth, Thomas

Hoving, and Lincoln Kirstein. New York Graphic Society/Little, Brown, \$40.00. The Brandywine River Museum has organized an exhibition of the works of N.C., Andrew, and James Wyeth with considerable difficulty, because the work of these highly successful artists is widely scattered and often subject to previous commitments. This book reproduces the collection finally assembled and displays an intriguing mixture of intergenerational resemblances and differences. Mr. Duff's essay covers the history of the family and accounts, in an oblique way, for the Wyeths' indifference to any artistic fashions but their own. Andrew Wyeth's reminiscences of his father are lively, affectionate, and full of detail on N.C.'s accomplishment and technique. The other contribution are, by comparison, rather weak.

THE BELLE LETTRES PAPERS by Charles Simmons. Morrow, \$12.95. Mr. Simmons, a former editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, knows the devious ways of reviewers, literary agents, and drunken authors. He also knows, evidently to exasperation, the preposterous plots and counterplots that can erupt in discontented magazine staff. His novel about these matters is wickedly amusing. Warning: it is not absolutely necessary to read all of those dreadful sonnets.

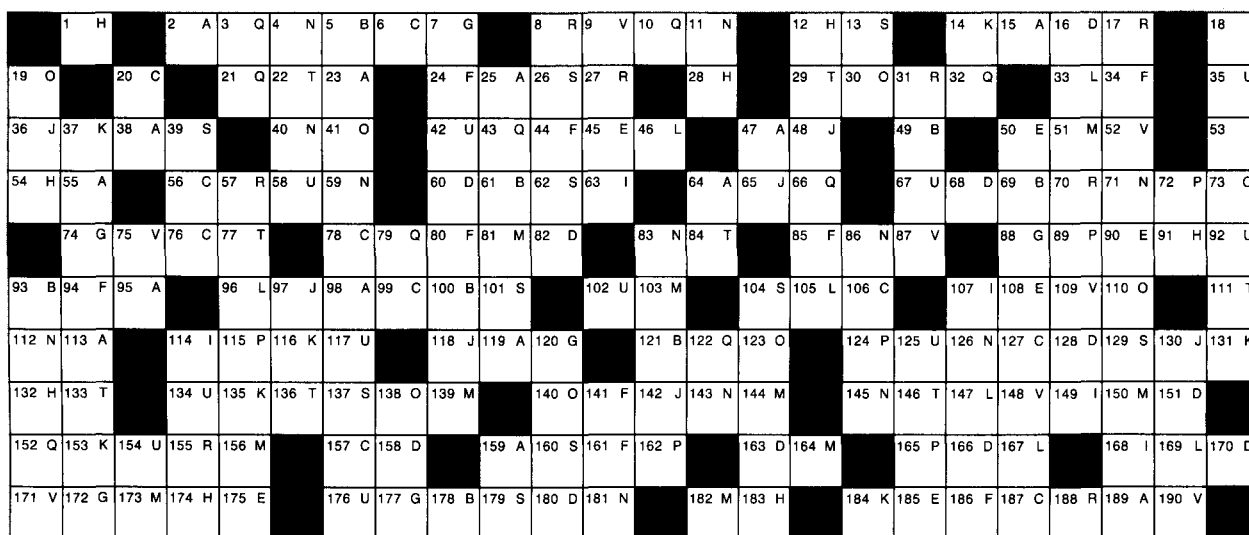
LEE'S TIGERS by Terry L. Jones. Louisiana State, \$22.50. The troops that Louisiana sent to join the Army of Northern Virginia became known collectively as the Tigers and "emerged from the Civil War with one of the most respected military records of any southern fighting unit." These same Tigers were also known as "drunken, lawless renegades who often posed a greater threat to the South's civilians than did the Yankees." The contradictory character of the Louisianians, well documented in letters, memoirs, and records, has provided Mr. Jones with much anecdotal material, enabling him to make a reconstruction of events that goes well beyond the usual chronicle of So-and-so's brigade here and Whatsisname's corps there. Well written and well organized, this is a fine history for Civil War buffs.

AMERICAN HOUSES by Philip Langsdorf Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$29.95. This book is an expanded version of "The American House," which appeared in the September, 1984, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. —Phoebe-Lou Ad

ACROSTIC No. 25

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation. The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 24 appears on page 83.

- W. Sales extravaganza (4 wds.)
55 119 98 2 38 113 159 15 189
25 95 64 47 23
- X. Huntress of myth whom suitors raced
93 178 49 100 5 61 121 69
- Y. Teen of a West Coast subculture (2 wds.)
127 20 56 78 76 6 99 157 106 187
- Z. Basketball star of the Detroit Pistons (2 wds.)
128 158 60 170 166 68 82 163 16
180 151
- Church officer
90 175 108 50 185 45
- Piece of lumber (hyph.)
85 186 44 24 94 141 34 80 161
- "... our sometime —, now our queen" (*Hamlet*)
88 177 7 172 74 120
- Posh section from Philadelphia to Paoli (2 wds.)
174 12 1 183 132 28 54 91
- Pacific battle site (2 wds.)
18 114 63 107 149 168 53
- Lustrous fabric
36 130 118 48 65 142 97
- Charcoal brazier
153 116 131 37 184 14 135

- L. Loudspeaker for high frequencies
46 96 105 167 33 169 147
- M. Fabulous combination of eagle and horse
156 182 150 139 51 81 144 173 164 103
- N. Johnny Cash hit (4 wds.)
71 4 83 11 59 145 86 143 181
40 112 126
- O. Optimistic; confident
110 140 41 73 138 30 19 123
- P. Influential Venetian painter
162 89 165 124 115 72
- Q. Ross Macdonald's private eye (2 wds.)
3 10 152 79 43 21 122 32 66
- R. Antipollution activist
27 155 57 8 70 17 188 31
- S. Meal-paying method (2 wds.)
39 179 62 137 104 13 26 101 160 129
- T. Kiss
22 77 136 146 29 111 84 133
- U. Classic Abbott and Costello routine (3 wds.)
92 134 102 35 58 125 42 154 176
67 117
- V. Honeymooner
148 87 52 171 75 109 9 190

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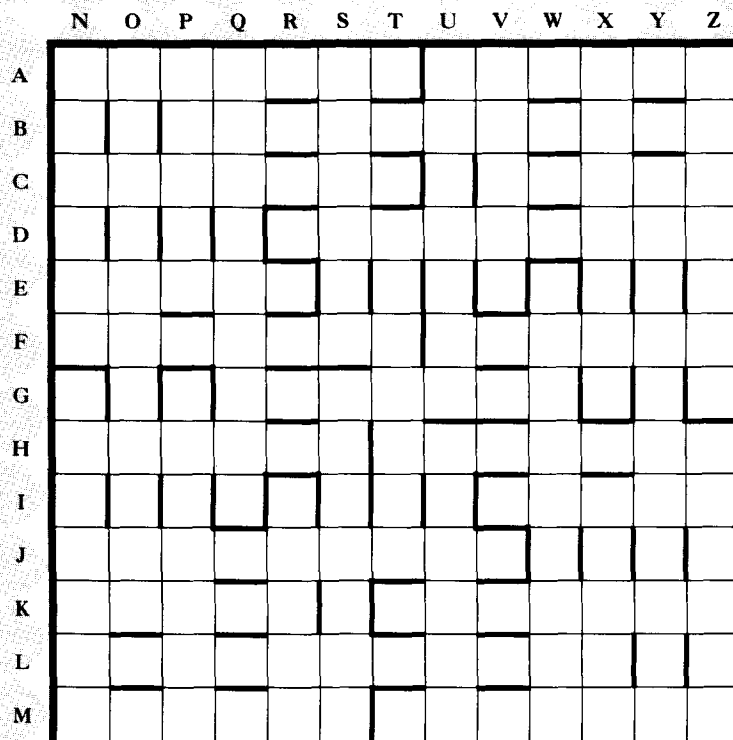
THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

COORDINATION

Each of this puzzle's clues (which are given in no special order) contains two extraneous letters. These intruders may occur in any part of the clue, not necessarily side by side. The two letters, which should be ignored in solving the clue, provide the coordinates of the clue answer's starting place in the diagram. Answers include four proper nouns.

*The answers to last month's
Puzzler appear on page 83.*



CLUES

1. On deck, fed in location toward the west (7)
2. Henry's crazy about zone for pines (6)
3. Around arrival, becomes stormiest high up (7)
4. Bit of grain left in hog pen for swan (7)
5. Dim dolt describes daffy dunce (7)
6. Dawn hour enveloped in glow (6)
7. Good friend goes around her tart shop (7)
8. Policy-getters' renewed spirit (11)
9. I goofed, returning pan with silverware (5)
10. Splinter group gets behind Old Norse (9)
11. Flatfoot keeps his quart (rum) in suit (9)
12. Snaky groups of athletes in swarms (5)
13. Forgave trap door (5)
14. Outcast orphan with tousled hair has no alternative (6)
15. Former fancy seizes Alou (6)
16. Boil with rage about Ali topping a tycoon (11)
17. Encircle poor, loveless Thoreau in awe (7)
18. Ex-brute repelled palates (7)
19. Going through maze and erratically winding course (7)
20. Book Trudi shifted to private room (7)
21. Rail group backing inventor (5)
22. Pop and Margaret snacked, eating bran and fruit (11)
23. Secret new account contains British pound (6)
24. Noise surrounds ox in snare (5)
25. Give following fellow skin ailment (5)
26. We cried foul about zest for European (9)
27. Dark mutt taken in on base (7)
28. The man repaired faucet for bewitching goddess (6)
29. Grace pin sample with ornamental lines (7)
30. Arrest lies about Ron's results (11)
31. TV witch crumpled a map to southern city (5)
32. Read about lamprey wounds (6)
33. In *GQ* discussion, hail Autry's clean living (7)
34. Band of ranchers, to Jill (9)
35. Fifty to ninety covered with fuzz (5)
36. Mark discs turning ground with notch (7)
37. Burden Ted carried in terror (7)
38. Height of grass keeping my end wild (6)

te: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD WATCH

BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

fiver *noun*, a person who donates at least five percent of his or her income to charitable organizations or five hours a week to volunteer service: "By spotlighting *fivers*, Independent Sector hopes to encourage others to increase their donations of money and time. 'We can hold out a specific standard of what individuals should be giving,' says president Brian O'Connell. 'Fiving is the key.'" (*American Demographics*).

BACKGROUND: This meaning of *fiver*, a word that for more than 140 years has enjoyed widespread use in the sense "a five-dollar bill" and that also has the sense "a five-pound note," has been used chiefly by the philanthropic coalition Independent Sector, which is attempting to reintroduce the practice of tithing. Independent Sector's aim is to double charitable giving by 1991. According to *American Demographics*, the number of *fivers* in the United States exceeds 40 million. Although Independent Sector has not yet developed a complete profile of the typical *fiver*, churchgoing seems to be characteristic.

hot button *noun*, *a*. A concern, factor, or interest known to have key influence on decision-making: "Much . . . revolves around what Campbell marketing research director Tony Adams calls consumer *hot buttons*—buzzwords like 'fresh,' 'healthful,' and 'high quality'" (*Inc.*). *b*. A product, service, discipline, or concept that generates widespread, intense interest or approval: "Ar-

Here are a few of the words being tracked by the editors of The American Heritage Dictionary, published by Houghton Mifflin. A new word that exhibits sustained use may eventually make its way into the dictionary. The information below represents the first stage of research, not the final product.

tificial intelligence . . . has made the leap from an obscure, ivory-tower chimera to an industry *hot button*" (*Data Communications*).

BACKGROUND: Our citations for this term go back to 1981, when an article in *The Washington Post* referred to various concerns motivating voters as *hot buttons*. The term has also been used with respect to sports medicine, food and food packaging, direct-mail book sales, and even art exhibits: "Today, museums are under attack for being hopelessly vulgar. If they're not being caught in manipulations of the art market . . . they're being accused of selling out—in both senses—with huge 'blockbuster' shows such as the roseate Renoir at the MFA or the kitsch of Andrew Wyeth's world. These are . . . *hot buttons*, and museums, once elitist, now frantic to be popular, can't help pushing them" (*New England Monthly*). *Hot button*, like *panic button*, very likely refers, in its nonfigurative sense, to an actual button—specifically, a button on a special handset—as attested by this entry in Jonathon Green's *Newspeak: A Dictionary of Jargon* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984): "*hot buttons* (TV)—those buttons by which a home viewer can 'vote' or otherwise participate in interactive . . . television."

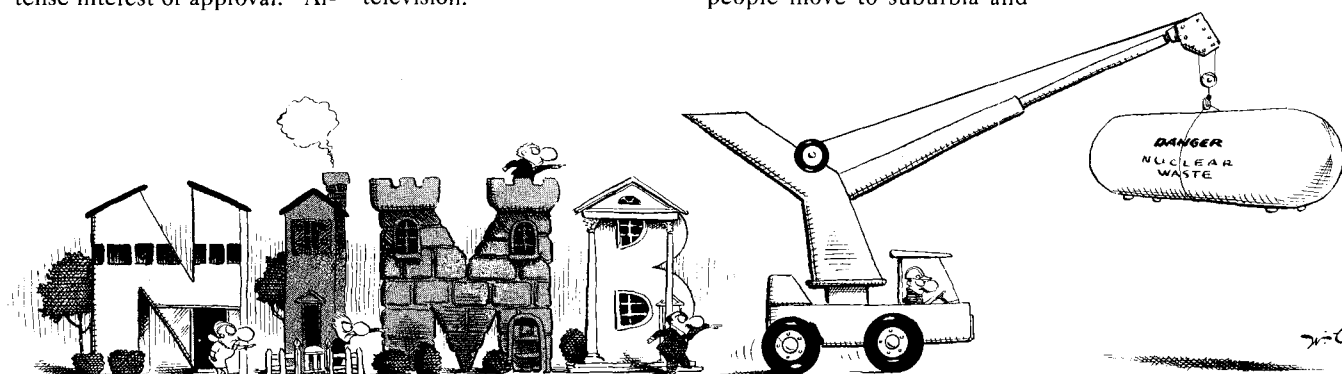
nimby or **NIMBY** *acronym*, *not in my back yard*: "Home builders and city planners have a new name for an old enemy—the *Nimbys* . . . , those who want no construction that might disturb the character and real estate value of their neighborhoods" (*Forbes*). "They are not screamers. They are *NIMBYS*," [Leeta] Pistone says, referring to the derogatory acronym . . . which applies to groups that oppose projects in their own neighborhoods but don't mind seeing them elsewhere" (*The Los Angeles Times*).

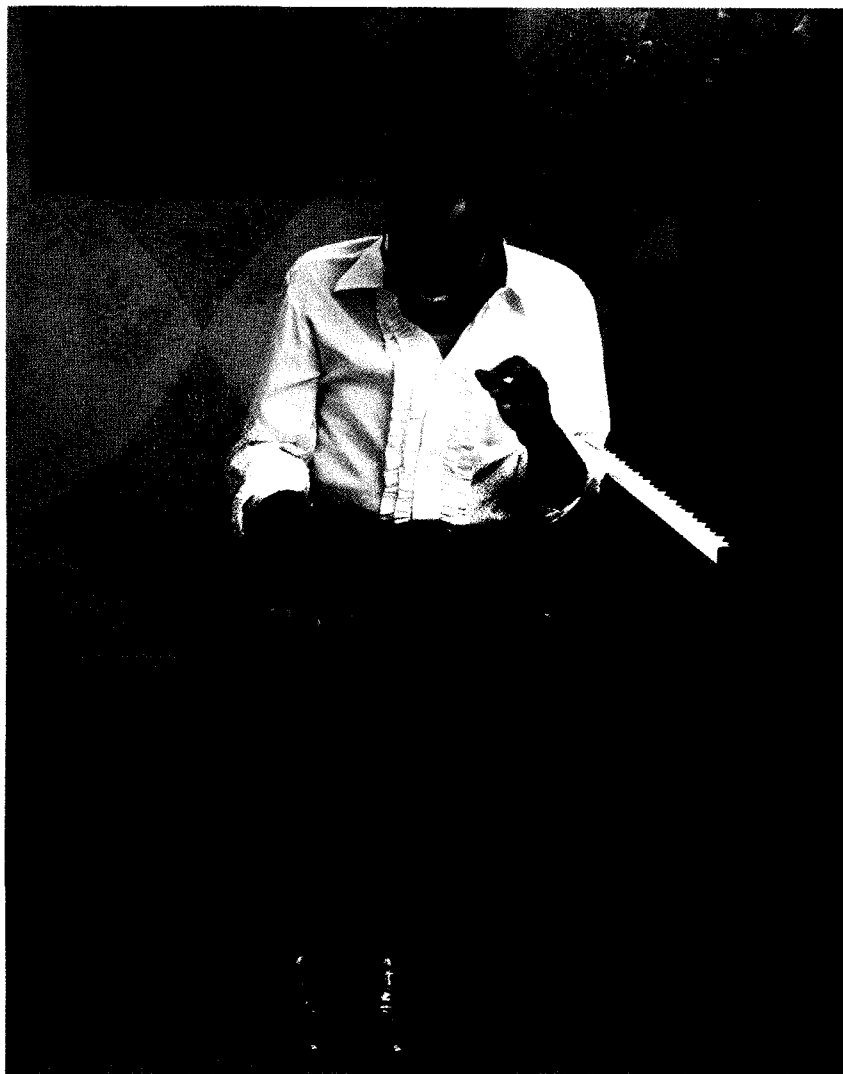
BACKGROUND: According to the September, 1982, issue of *Nuclear News*, "A few years ago ANS [American Nuclear Society] stalwart Walton Rodger coined the acronym *NIMBY* . . . to describe the modern national syndrome that urges the immediate rejection of almost any large construction project in any local area." Objectionable new things might be freeways, sewage treatment and disposal sites, prisons, halfway houses, power plants, garbage dumps, airports, missile silos, and nuclear-waste repositories. According to a May 8, 1987, *Chicago Tribune* article by Eric Zorn, the identifying characteristics of *Nimbys* include "petitions in hand, veins standing out on neck." Zorn went on to point out that "as more and more people move to suburbia and

the aging baby boom generation trades in its condos for colonials on cul-de-sacs, *Nimby*ness promises to flower."

orbiteer *verb*, to go around tall mountains, as opposed to scaling them: "To *orbiteer* Mt Everest, [Ned] Gillette, with longtime friend and accomplished adventurer Jan Reynolds, lived at between 17,000 and 24,000 feet for months and crossed six Himalayan mountain passes more than 20,000 feet high" (*Us*).

BACKGROUND: According to the *Us* citation, the climber Ned Gillette coined the word *orbiteering*. The word is of special interest because it employs the suffix *-eer*, which occurs with relative infrequency in English. It is used chiefly to form nouns, and it means "one associated with, concerned with, or engaged in." Most nouns formed with *-eer* are animate (*balladeer, cannoneer, auctioneer*), but inanimate examples exist (*gazetteer*) as well. In the latter part of the seventeenth century gerunds and participles with *-ee* as a constituent began to appear. In some instances the gerund and participial forms pre-date the finite or finite verb forms. The noun *engineer*, for example, goes back to the fourteenth century. The participle *engineering* appeared in 1681, and the gerund in 1720, but the finite verb form *engineered* appeared only in 1781. Many *-eer* words have pejorative denotations and connotations: *privateer, sloganizer, racketeer*, and *profiteer* are typical examples.





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